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MIDSUMMER FAYS,

OR

THE HOLIDAYS AT WOODLEIGH.

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BY

SUSAN PINDAR,

AUTHOR OF "FIRESIDE FAIRIES," ETC.

"There is wisdom with fairies—I'll visit their school;
They will show me their order, and teach me their rule."

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William D. Sohier
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MIDSUMMER FAYS;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

SUMMER is here, with song and sunshine, with fragrance and flowers!

The snow has long since melted from the hill-side, and the ice from the fettered stream; the tall branches are no more garlanded with glittering icicles, and very many weeks have elapsed since Jack Frost traced his last droll etching on the window-pane in token of farewell.

The crocus and daisy were the first that ventured to peep out in the early spring; and then as the soft breeze breathed gently, and the sun smiled more warmly over the benumbed ground, other blossoms timidly opened their leaves, tiny blades sprang up, and soon the spirit

of life and beauty moved abroad upon the earth, calling new loveliness into being ever as she passed.

Summer is here! There are sweet flowers in the meadow, and sunshine in the glade: there is perfume in the morning breeze, and music everywhere. The merry brook tumbles noisily over the stones, or glides gently amid the long grass out into the broad open sunshine, singing ever on its way of freedom and delight. Soft summer winds murmur amid green leaves, and blithe birds build their nests among waving branches, where before the bleak northern blast whistled, and the long icicles hung.

Summer is here again; and now the midsummer holidays have come, and once more Aunt Elsie's beloved little people are gathered about her at Woodleigh. How pleasant the dear old house looks, nestling down among the green hills, and almost covered with flowering vines, and branches of tall trees that seem to twine their arms lovingly above the low roof! The fine sloping hills, down which the sleds ran so famously over the crisp winter snow, are now clothed in rich green verdure, and gay with daisies and bright wild-flowers, while the large skating-pond,

freed from its icy bondage, and fringed with water-lilies, lies like a silver mirror, faithfully reflecting the graceful willows which bend admiringly over its surface.

Fragrant Madeira-vines and brilliant honeysuckles clamber up the porch, and cluster above the door; while some ambitious young branches stretch themselves along the wall, holding fast to the rough stone with their delicate tendrils, and forcing their way between the chinks of the half-closed shutters, to get a peep within; seeming ever, as they sway in the soft air, to nod in approbation of what they see. An inquisitive sunbeam has already crept through a small crevice, and now lies broken into fragments upon the floor of the old parlor.

The dear, cozy, old parlor, that seemed in the cold winter evenings so exactly suited to the season, and whose very atmosphere breathed of warmth and comfort, appears now in that shaded light the most delightful of all cool and pleasant places in the sultry heat of noon. Thin white muslin draperies shade the windows, the sofas and chairs are covered with delicate chintz, bright with richly painted flowers, and cool matting is spread upon the floor. The shining fire-irons are

crossed demurely upon the painted hearth; while an immense china jar, filled with fragrant magnolias, now occupies the place of the huge Christmas log, and fills the room with its delicious breathings. There are flowers too upon the mantel-shelf, and on the table an exquisite moss-basket filled with freshly gathered roses. No wonder the sunbeam and the honeysuckle love to peep into the shaded quiet room.

All within is very still, and but for the newly gathered flowers, one might think the place deserted; but borne upon the wings of the summer air, a shout of merry laughter rings out from a little wood just across the pond; and there, under the shade of the great forest-trees, with books and baskets scattered around, is the dear Aunt Elsie, surrounded by a laughing group, who have seated her in state upon a rustic bench, made of the strong gnarled branches of a wild grape-vine, and with joyous unchecked mirth, hail her as Queen of the May, while the kind old lady looks lovingly upon the group of bright young faces which cluster like living flowers about her.

What a pleasant scene it is out beneath those grand old trees, and how beautiful in the freshness of youth is the merry little band collected there!

There is Harry Wilder, a tall boy of fourteen, who has appointed himself guardian of the party in all their rambles; and Grace and Clara, his gentle cousins; and merry romping little Kate Sutherland, who is always the first to scramble up the steep hills, or spring across a brook, never heeding the stepping-stones, but bounding over like a young fawn, her bright eyes dancing with joy, and her long curls flying back upon the wind, as she laughingly challenges the rest to follow.

Then, there is her more thoughtful sister Mabel, and her brothers, Edward and Robert, who are always ready for a race or a ramble, enjoying every pastime with unwearied delight.

The orphan, Frank Field is there beside, with his darling sister Lilie, who seems less childlike than her years, and clings so fondly to her brother, as though she felt how utterly alone they are in the great world, and how they must be all and all to each other.

Then there are the two blooming sisters, Marian and Ellen Lee, with their lively cousin Fred, and student brother Arthur, who is Frank Field's chosen companion.

And last of all, though far from least in the hearts of all who know her, is Aunt Elsie's niece.

sweet Edith Morton, who is at the same time playfellow and instructress of the little group, and shares with Aunt Elsie herself their entire and perfect love.

And now the bright sunshine smiled in upon them as they gathered about the dear Aunt Elsie, and little Kate Sutherland exclaimed,

"I think Aunt Elsie ought to be crowned, since we have chosen her Queen of the May."

"Yes, so she should," cried Fred Lee; "and here come Grace and Edith with their aprons full of flowers: come, young ladies, all employ your graceful fingers to form a wreath, while Arthur and I compose a speech worthy of this momentous occasion."

"Not quite so fast, Master Fred," said Grace, as he approached her; "we have gathered these flowers to fill Aunt Elsie's mantel-vases, and perhaps she would rather enjoy their freshness for several days, than see them woven into a wreath that will so soon entirely wither."

"But we can easily gather more," replied Kate, who now drew near with several of the other children: "may I take yours, Edith?"

"Hear first what Aunt Elsie says," answered Edith: "she may perhaps decline the crown."

"Oh, no!" cried several voices: "you will like to be queen, will you not, Aunt Elsie?"

"You forget, my dear children," replied the old lady, "that both the season of May and my youth are long since past; and I have no desire at this late period to assume a crown even of flowers, which would but ill-become my withered face. I think even your young imaginations would fail to transform me into the queen of love and beauty."

"But you *are* queen of love, because we all love you," said little Lilie, fondly.

"And queen of beauty, because *we* are your devoted slaves," added Fred, with a mock heroic air.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!" exclaimed Harry Wilder, in his droll way: "for my part, as a friend of republican liberty, I heartily approve Aunt Elsie's resolution."

The boys applauded, and insisted that Harry should proceed with his speech; but some of the smaller children seemed disappointed, until Edith whispered that it would scarcely seem respectful to persevere in their design against Aunt Elsie's wish.

"If Aunt Elsie refuses the crown, she will not

reject our offerings," said Clara, presenting one of the baskets, filled with flowers, as she spoke.

"I accept the gift with pleasure," replied Aunt Elsie, joining in the spirit of the children, "and command you, as dutiful subjects, to arrange these flowers into tasteful bouquets, before they wither."

This was no difficult command to fulfil, and the little girls immediately seated themselves at Aunt Elsie's feet, with the baskets of flowers beside them; while the boys busied themselves selecting the most beautiful, and some of them cut long slender blades of the new grass to tie up the bouquets.

It was pleasant to observe the kind and unselfish spirit that prompted each to desire the other's group to equal her own: there was no wrangling for the freshest or most beautiful flowers; but many exclamations of delight burst forth as the merry group proceeded with their graceful employment, and Aunt Elsie's admiration was constantly challenged for some flower of exceeding beauty.

"This is my favorite," cried Clara Wilder, holding up a stately white lily as she spoke; "it has all the fragrance of a rose without its thorns;

and what can be more beautiful than these pure white leaves?"

"A lily always reminds me of some pale, graceful, high-born lady," replied her cousin Harry.

"One who wraps herself in a white Cashmere, and shivers at every wind that blows," added Fred.

"I have often watched the lilies floating on the water, and wondered they were not washed away."

"You forget that their roots are firm and unshaken beneath," said Edith, gently.

"Like Faith," added Grace, "of which they seem to be emblems."

"I used to think the flowers were fairies," said Marian Lee, "and remember watching in the moonlight, hoping to see them assume their own shapes."

"Oh, Aunt Elsie," interrupted little Lilie, dropping the flowers from her lap as she eagerly sprang up—"Oh, Aunt Elsie, can't you tell us a fairy story about a lily? I am sure you can find one in the old portfolio."

Aunt Elsie smiled. "I suspect you think the old portfolio is inexhaustible," she said; "how-

ever, I will try to tell you a short story this time without its aid: it is not a fairy tale, but merely relates the history of the lily, which Clara so much admires."

"You are so good," whispered Lilie, delightedly kissing Aunt Elsie's cheek. "And now," she added, turning to her companions, "you must all be still and listen, because Aunt Elsie's stories are so true."

"I cannot answer for the truth of this one, Lilie," rejoined the old lady, laughing, while the children eagerly expressed their desire to hear it; "and I doubt whether you will like it so very much after all: it may, however, please some among you: it is very short. I will relate it as well as I can, and call it

The Legend of the Lily.

There were once two stars of equal magnitude, who for countless years had traversed together the boundless realms of space, and every morn and night sang, as with one voice, their hymn of praise and thanksgiving.

THE LILY.

Far beneath them the earth revolved within its orbit, and seemed to the stars, as they gazed down upon it, to be a planet of great and wondrous beauty.

Long had they watched the changing seasons, and marked the varied and beautiful forms which nature takes, until one star longed to leave his sphere, and dwell upon the earth. His twin companion saw, with unspeakable grief, this restless desire; for well she knew that if he left his native home, he could return to it no more.

Tenderly she reminded him of the ages they had passed in sweet communion together, of her own utter loneliness should he leave her, and the fearful doom that awaited him if he fell from his own sphere: his light would then be quenched in unutterable darkness, and his glory departed forever.

The discontented star listened silently: he knew that his purity would be sullied, and his doom irrevocable if he left his native home; but the desire increased within him; his bright brow paled, and his harp no more sounded the hymn of adoration and praise, while he still gazed yearningly upon the earth.

At length there was sadness in the spheres, for

the star had fallen, and his place could be filled no more forever!

Sorrowfully the deserted star had watched the downward course of her lost companion. She saw him fall to earth, and there become a dark, unsightly thing; the light of his glory quenched in the deep waters where he had fallen.

Sad and lonely she came each night, and gazed steadfastly down upon the stream wherein her lost mate was buried. Her tender, earnest beam fell gently upon the water, and penetrated even unto the depths where the fallen one now rested in utter darkness and desolation.

Then when the gentle forgiving ray fell upon the bosom of the lost, unhappy star, he slowly lifted his bowed head, and turned his dimmed brow upward in repentant humility.

And still the lonely star shone steadfastly down, until, cheered by her encouraging tenderness, and guided by her faithful light, the fallen one raised his head above the surface of the stream, while his pale brow turned ever, in repentant humble love, to the mate he had forsaken; but his chains were bound securely beneath the wave, and he could return to his native sphere no more.

Still the loving star shone prayerfully upon

him, and his brow, from which the glory had departed forever, became white and radiant, in perfect purity; and, though he might no more join in the song of the spheres, yet the hymn of praise and thanksgiving came up in a gush of rich fragrance from his heart; and the loving star sang for joy.

Men passing, said, "Behold a beautiful lily."

But the stars whispered together, "Behold our brother, the fallen star!"

And ever, as the gentle one smiled tenderly upon him, there mingled with the star-flower's prayerful breathing, a tone of never-dying sadness,—

"Thou art lost to me forever: I can come to thee no more!"

Then the light of the faithful star paled in sorrow; and lo, as the fallen one turned his pale brow upward, the place of his watchful mate was vacant, and a sweet voice breathed close at his side,—

"I am with thee forever: Forget me not!"

And there was sadness in the spheres, for the faithful star had fallen; but joy upon the earth, for a new flower was born.

Aunt Elsie paused, and little Frank Field lifting his head from his hand, said thoughtfully,

"The flowers have always appeared to me to be the stars of earth."

"I shall love lilies better than ever now," said Clara, softly, "for they seem to teach, by their purity, the power of repentance."

"Aided by trustful, unvarying love," added Edith, "it was the beam of the faithful star, that led the fallen one to lift his head above the waters in which he was buried."

"And afterwards she came down to earth, and dwelt with him always," said Grace. "The Forget-me-not may well be called the emblem of constancy and truth."

"Who ever thought of a little blue Forget-me-not being a star!" cried Kate, merrily: "why, I have gathered handfuls of them, hundreds of times, and never suspected them to be more than mere wild-flowers; but I shall be a little afraid of them hereafter, if this is one of Aunt Elsie's true stories, Lilie."

"No," replied the child, with a little sigh and a disappointed air, "no, I don't believe this one

is true: it is not at all like a fairy story, which I like so much better."

"Never mind, Lilie; there are plenty of fairy tales in store," said Aunt Elsie, laying her hand soothingly on the little girl's head, "and when we come out into the woods to-morrow, I will have one in readiness for you: will that do?"

"Oh, yes, thank you," replied the child; "but I thought the story of the Lily very pretty indeed, only I understand about the fairies so much easier, you know."

"Lilie is scarcely able to soar up to the stars yet," said Harry, pleasantly, "but she makes a darling little fairy herself; so I think we shall keep her on earth a while longer."

The bouquets were now all arranged, and after being submitted to Aunt Elsie's inspection, and duly admired, they were carefully put in one of the baskets and carried to the house. The children then placed them in vases filled with fresh water, and for several days their beauty and fragrance lent an added charm to the pleasant, dear old parlor.

CHAPTER II.

Little Lilie awoke the next morning full of hope and expectation. The party were to spend all day in the woods; and Dinah had prepared a nice cold collation for them: Aunt Elsie too had promised to tell them a fairy story, and altogether Lilie was quite sure this day was to be one of perfect enjoyment.

Her dreams had been very pleasant: visions of fairies and fairy-land floated through her mind, and seemed to prepare her for the bright reality to come. So as soon as she awoke, she jumped up hastily, and ran to draw back the window curtain, that the glad morning sunshine might beam into the room.

But poor little Lilie was doomed to disappointment: a heavy fog rested on the hills, almost concealing them from sight, the air was close and heavy, the sky covered in clouds, and the raindrops fell steadily and fast.

Lilie looked in vain for a single spot of blue

among the leaden-colored clouds; she tried to think it might be only a shower; but the rain fell with a dull determined sound, as though it had fully made up its mind to drench the earth that day; and the little girl was forced to abandon all hope of the projected party, while, with a very sad and discontented face, she dressed herself, and joined her companions down stairs.

"Well, we must forego our out-door ramble to-day," cried Robert Sutherland, as Lilie entered the room, "and strive to amuse ourselves within: here comes Lilie, looking as sorry and disappointed as possible."

"I am sure I look sorry and disappointed too," cried his sister Kate, "for I don't like to be cooped up in the house in summer one bit; but I mean to keep myself busy, and then the day won't appear so long."

"That is true philosophy, Kate," answered Harry Wilder: "I believe those who are constantly employed have no time to be discontented. This will be a fine day, boys, to finish our bows and arrows."

"That it will," cried the boys.

"I suppose," continued Fred, "that Arthur has some book in store to pore over: he is never at

a loss; and Frank seems quite content to sit at the window and watch the rain."

"I am listening to the sound of the rain-drops on the leaves," replied Frank: "it is just like the chiming of tiny bells."

"I suspect you are more than half a poet, Franky," said Edith, smilingly, as she drew near him. "Do you ever think there might be fairies hid beneath the leaves?"

"No," replied the boy, with an answering smile, "but I like to think the flowers feel grateful for this summer rain, and so send up a voice of thanksgiving."

"I wonder which they love the best, sunshine or rain," said Ellen, musingly.

"If I was a flower, I should certainly prefer sunshine," cried merry Kate Sutherland; "and I think the flowers are of my opinion: see how they droop their heads beneath the weight of the drops."

"So they do in the heat of noonday," replied her sister Mabel. "If you were a flower, Kate, I think you would find both rain and sunshine necessary to your existence."

"Certainly," added Harry Wilder: "rain to the flowers is like disappointments to us: you see

how we droop now, but to-morrow we will be fresher and brighter than ever."

"Well spoken, my young moralists," said Aunt Elsie, who had entered unperceived: "clouds and sunshine are doubtless as needful to us as to the flowers; but no matter how lowering the clouds appear without, let us take care always to keep sunshine within. I think I see one little cloud here that threatens to drop rain; but I hope it will only be like a summer shower, and end in brightness," she added, turning towards Lilie, who had been standing idly tapping the window-pane during all this discussion, and whose clouded brow and melancholy face certainly threatened a shower of tears.

"Why, Lilie," cried Kate, "don't look so very sorrowful, it will certainly be clear to-morrow; and besides, it does not follow that fairy stories *must* be read in the woods: does it Aunt Elsie? shall we not hear one to-day?"

"We will see about it after breakfast," replied the old lady, smiling kindly at Kate's good-natured efforts to soothe little Lilie's disappointment. "I doubt not that even the fairies will feel content to be housed during such a drenching rain as this."

The sound of the bell now summoned all to the breakfast-table, where a plentiful supply of delicious sweet milk and fine white rolls awaited them, to which they did such ample justice, as proved their disappointment did not affect their appetites. After the meal, Edith, assisted by the elder girls, washed and put aside the breakfast things; and then after one more anxious look at the clouds (which showed no disposition to disperse), they fully resigned themselves to the necessity of spending the entire day within-doors, and arranged their employments accordingly.

And after all, this rainy day was quite opportune, for there were many unfinished tasks to be accomplished. Work-boxes were produced, drawing pencils sharpened; and the little party seemed determined to improve their time profitably. The cloud vanished from little Lilie's brow, as Kate and herself became intent upon the welfare of their respective dolls, who were now going through all the various scenes of being dressed for parties like young ladies, and put in bed like bad children; paying visits, and catching colds, with a rapidity that would have proved fatal to any other than such wonderful constitutions as these dollies possessed.

Aunt Elsie was busied about household affairs, and the morning was far spent when she joined the children. They were intently engaged in their respective employments, and it was not until after dinner that they reminded Aunt Elsie of the promised story.

The kind old lady immediately complied with their request, by selecting a manuscript, which she called,

The Fairy Sunbeam.

Once upon a time, so very long ago that neither you nor I could count the years which have elapsed since then, there lived a miserable woman, with a little daughter.

The woman lived in a mean garret, and was so poor that both she and her little one were oftentimes obliged to go without bread: so by this you may know that she had not much to give away.

Nevertheless, late one stormy night, long after she had taken her shivering child in her arms and laid down to rest, as best she might, on her miserable pallet of straw, she heard a timid

knocking at the door. Groping her way in the dark, she hastened to lift the latch; and, as she opened the door, saw, by the faint light that came from without, a figure standing upon the threshold.

"I am dripping wet and very weary," said the stranger, in a low voice: "will you grant me shelter for the night?"

"That will I, and welcome," replied the good woman; "but it is a sorry place to come to for comfort, where there is no fire nor light."

As she spoke, the stranger entered, and the poor woman hastened to put together the few dying embers on the hearth, and threw upon them her sole remaining armful of brushwood, which she speedily coaxed into a blaze.

The stranger threw off his wet garment, and drew a low settle to the fire, while the good woman produced her last roll, and offered it with words of welcome.

Her strange visitor took the proffered bread; and it seemed to her, as he sat there, that the fire gave out unusual warmth, and a light, as of sunshine, filled the miserable room.

She looked with eager interest upon her guest. He was very young, with a fair smiling face, and

long bright hair, flowing upon his shoulders. His apparent youth and delicate frame, moved still more the compassion of the poor woman, who besought him to rest upon the straw pallet, which she would cheerfully resign to him.

But the strange guest insisted that she should lie down again beside her child, while he dried the wet from his garments; and the mother at length complied.

She laid awake for a very long time, wondering that the fire of light brush did not die out: but the bright flame went crackling up the chimney throughout all the night; and, as the pleasant warmth spread about the miserable garret, drying the dampness from the walls, a sense of comfort crept over her, and she fell into a deep sleep.

She dreamed in her sleep that the stranger stood beside her pallet, clothed in bright-colored garments, and his long fair hair floating to his waist; he looked kindly on her, and said—

"You have unknowingly shown charity to one who has the power to serve you. This vase contains a sunbeam from Fairy-land; and so long as you keep it safely, you need not despair of the future."

He held up a small crystal vase as he spoke, which seemed to be filled with a living light; and as its bright ray fell upon the poor woman's face, she awoke with a start, and looked about her.

It was morning: the gray light of dawn came peering in through the open crevices and the broken window, but seemed quenched in that brighter glow which still filled the chamber. The fire yet burned upon the hearth, but the stranger had disappeared.

The woman arose, bewildered, and there, upon the mantel-shelf, stood a tiny crystal vase, which emitted a light like a sunbeam. Then the poor woman knew she had not been dreaming, but that all which had passed was reality. She put the vase carefully away, and from this time all things prospered with her. She no longer abandoned herself to despair, as she had formerly done, but relying upon the stranger's promise, went to work with renewed spirit. She believed the fairy sunbeam would eventually bring her some great good; and she already felt its influence in her constant and hopeful efforts.

She was enabled to support herself and child in comparative comfort, working early and late,

while the fairy sunbeam constantly sent forth a cheering light, making even her desolate garret an abode of hope and peace.

But the good woman at length fell sick, and died, leaving her little daughter Serena quite alone in the wide world, with no other possession than the crystal vase which held the fairy sunbeam.

Serena had lived all her life within the influence of the sunbeam, and she knew how much it had contributed to the comfort of their home. She believed firmly what her mother told her of the wonderful good it would bring at last, and promised with streaming eyes, to treasure it with the greatest care.

After her mother was buried, the little girl felt very desolate and sorrowful. She had nobody now to love or care for her, and although still very young, was forced to provide for herself. The neighbors were very poor, and unable to assist her; but they advised her to go up to the great city, where she would doubtless find employment, as many other children did.

Serena could do no better than take their advice; so carefully concealing the precious vase in her bosom, and being supplied with a little

basket of provision by the kind neighbors who pitied her forlorn condition, she turned from her native place to travel on foot to the great city.

It was a bright morning when she set forth on her journey, but she had a long distance to walk, and she knew that at least one night must be spent in the woods, or by the roadside.

This thought did not, however, discourage Serena, for the fairy sunbeam seemed to warm her heart, while its bright ray mingled with the sunshine that fell upon her path.

The little girl had walked many a weary mile, and night was drawing on apace, when she saw a boy seated by the wayside, crying sadly.

Moved by his distress, Serena approached him, and asked the cause of his grief.

"I am travelling to the great city," replied the boy, "but have lost myself in these woods. I am hungry and tired, and afraid to stay here all night alone."

"Is that all?" returned the little girl, encouragingly, "why, I am no better off myself: I, too, am going to the great city. I am tired, and must stay in the woods all night. But what then? we will rest to-night, and start again in the morning. See, I have bread! let us share it together. I

am so glad to find a companion! the way will seem pleasant and short if we travel hand in hand."

The boy looked up in surprise as she spoke these fearless words; and, as he did so, the fairy sunbeam, which Serena carried in her bosom, gleamed full upon him. He felt its magical influence; the woods seemed to him less lonely, and the way less drear. He answered the little girl with a smile, and, rising from the bank, walked on with her, hand in hand, while the fairy sunbeam still fell on him, and shone upon their path.

When the sun at last went to sleep behind the hills, and left the moon to take his place as best she could, our two little travellers selected a smooth, grassy bank near the roadside, where they determined to rest for the night.

The boy, who called himself Conrad, busily gathered the dry twigs and branches, and then, by rubbing pieces of bark together, produced a fire, to keep off any wild animals who might be prowling about. While Serena opened her basket, and they partook together of the provision it contained.

They told each other their histories; and Con-

rad said he had left his mother to try and earn something in the great city to which they were journeying. He wept when Serena told him how lonely she was in the world, and promised to take her some time to his mother who he was sure would love her very dearly.

Thus the time wore away, and all the while the fairy sunbeam was mingling its ray with the bright fire-flame, and sending a glow to the boy's heart. But of this he knew nothing: he only felt that he was happier and stronger since Serena joined him.

At length, through very weariness, the children slept; and still the fire burned brightly—no evil beast disturbed their rest, and they awoke at dawn, refreshed and grateful, to pursue their way.

For a time they journeyed on with light hearts; but at length they came to a thick clump of trees, where the road seemed lost to view, and the branches were so closely interlaced that even daylight could not penetrate them.

Conrad paused in fear—he knew not which way to go; but Serena saw the light of the fairy sunbeam falling on her path, and went steadily forward.

"Come back," cried the boy, "we shall be lost if we enter those dismal-looking woods; we had better rest here until some traveller passes, of whom we can ask the way."

But Serena answered, "Courage, Conrad, there is a path out of every wood, and we shall find one out of this, I am sure." So saying, she stepped boldly on in the track of the fairy sunbeam.

When Conrad saw the little girl so determined, he had nothing left but to follow; and as she took his hand, he felt again the sunbeam's influence, and listening to her pleasant voice, quite forgot his fears.

Not that he was a coward at all, for he bravely pursued and killed a large snake that lay across their path, and forded the rapid streams with his little companion on his shoulders; but difficulties soon discouraged him, and he saw only the dangers of the way. In short, he needed the fairy sunbeam.

Weary and travel-worn, the young adventurers reached at last the great city, where a poor market-woman gave them shelter for the night; and, upon hearing their story, offered at once to employ Serena, for she too began to feel the in-

fluence of the charm which the little girl carried in her bosom.

Through the kindness of this good woman, Conrad found a situation with a neighboring gardener; and although the children were very sad at the thought of parting, they consoled themselves with the prospect of meeting very often.

"I am sure I shall never be contented away from you," said Conrad, sorrowfully; "you always seem to make every thing go well, and I forget there are any troubles in the world when you speak; but now, day after day will come and go without my seeing you, and I shall be very sad."

Serena smiled. "We shall meet very often," she said, "and take pleasant walks together after our work is done; then we will talk over all our plans; and as for troubles, why if they come, we will meet them together, that is all. Cheer up, there are bright days in store. Do you know that I expect to be rich, and very happy yet? Yes—a great lady—and ride in my coach, to be sure; and you shall ride, too."

Then the boy laughed, and the fairy sunbeam fell upon him, and sent a glow to his heart; and

thus, with renewed hope, he left his companion and went to his new home.

As time passed on, Serena became a great favorite with her new friends. Who, indeed, could help loving one who flung such a cheering influence about her, ever as she went? The sunbeam that she carried in her bosom constantly shed its magic light upon her path, and warmed her heart with its genial glow; and thus, though oftentimes crossed and harassed by cares, or wearied with the tiresome tasks that fell to her share, the little girl conquered all difficulties, and contrived to be very happy.

Conrad, on the contrary, allowed every circumstance to trouble him; and it was only the magic of the fairy beam and the light of Serena's countenance, that kept him from absolute despondency.

It chanced that among the customers whom Serena's bright face attracted to the stand of the poor market-woman, was a lady who was very rich, and very unhappy, just because she had nothing in the world to do, but ride in a fine coach and talk about her neighbors. She was tired of rich dresses and dainty food; she did not care for flowers; reading or thinking was too

much exertion; and this unfortunate lady could do nothing at all but recline upon a sofa, and sigh for something new.

When she first saw Serena's happy face, she envied her; but as she oftener met the little girl, she too began to feel the influence of the fairy sunbeam; and while she could not account for the charm Serena exercised over her, yet desired to have her always at her side.

The rich lady spoke to the good market-woman, and made her so many handsome presents, and talked so much of what she would do for the little girl, that the kind woman at length consented, though with many tears, to part with Serena, whom she dearly loved.

The child herself felt very unwilling to go; but when she saw Conrad's utter despair, as he spoke of her becoming a fine lady, and forgetting the poor gardener's boy, she strove to comfort him, and in the effort comforted herself.

The lady took Serena to her elegant home; and the little girl was dressed in fine clothing, and brought into the parlor every day to amuse her new friend. She felt sometimes impatient of the restraint put upon her actions, for she was not allowed to run and jump as she pleased,

but instructed to be quiet in all her movements.

Still she kept the fairy sunbeam in her bosom, and soon its wonderful influence was felt throughout the house. Every one loved Serena, for her presence inspired them with new joy, and life seemed beautiful to all who heard her words and looked upon her face.

Even the languid heart of the rich lady moved with a quickened pulse. She began to see beauty in the flowers that had hitherto passed unnoticed, and determined to adopt Serena as her child.

Meanwhile the little girl frequently saw Conrad, and cheered him with her hopeful smiles, while the influence of the fairy sunbeam was constantly increasing in her heart.

"You will be a great lord yet, Conrad," she would say; "yes, and will carry many fine things to your good mother; and then how rejoiced she will be to see you again! You work hard to be sure, but it is only for a season: the reward will certainly come; and to say the truth, I had much rather be out in the garden weeding and hoeing with you, than made to sit still on a chair half the day, or walk carefully among the flowers, lest

I should tear my fine clothes; but what is it after all, if we do our duty and see each other often: eh, Conrad?"

And then the boy would return to his work with renewed vigor, and so long as the influence of the fairy sunbeam remained, would indulge in pleasant visions of the happy time to come, when Serena and himself would sit at his mother's knee, and never be parted again; but after a while the glow would fade from his heart, and then again he sought his hopeful little companion.

The rich lady at last told Serena that she meant to adopt her for her own daughter, and as she would then be a great lady, and ride in her coach, she must never again speak to Conrad, who was only a poor gardener's boy, nor see the old market-woman, who was certainly not a suitable companion.

This distressed the little girl very much, and she begged the lady to send her away rather than forbid her to meet her friends; but the lady called her a silly child, who knew not what was best for her, and sent her up to her own room in disgrace.

As Serena stood by the window, she saw Conrad waiting beneath, and crept softly down stairs,

and out into the garden to meet him. The fairy sunbeam was still in her bosom, and so she thought within herself—

"Perhaps this may be the great good which the fairy sunbeam was to bring. I am to be a fine lady, and ride in a coach; but poor Conrad will be so sad when he cannot see me. I will give the sunbeam to him, and then who knows but in time he may become a great lord too; and then we will be happy, oh! so happy, together!"

Inspired with these thoughts, she told Conrad how the rich lady meant to take her for her child; and then taking the crystal vase from her bosom, she gave it to the boy, telling him to be careful of it for her sake, and it would bring him good fortune at last.

Conrad placed the vase carefully in his breast, but no sooner had he done so, than he felt its inspiring influence: it now became his turn to encourage Serena, and speak of the happy days in store for both.

The children parted, Conrad to persevere hopefully in his toil, and Serena to the bondage which she now for the first time felt intolerably irksome.

It was not long before the lady began to no-

tice the change in the little girl: she no longer went singing about the house, but became silent and sad. She performed her tasks mechanically; but all the finery and dainties which were heaped upon her failed to make her glad: she pined constantly for Conrad and her humble friend. The glow of the fairy sunbeam was fast fading from her heart, and the little girl grew dull and spiritless.

The lady became offended at Serena: now that the fairy sunbeam was gone from her heart, she failed to interest or amuse.

"You have become such a dull moping little thing," said the lady at last, "that I will keep you no more: go back to the friends for whom you so constantly pine."

So saying she put Serena out into the road, and shut the door. The little girl walked a short way, and then sat down in great sorrow: the tears fell upon her lap in showers, when she heard a familiar voice exclaim,

"What, my little Serena, sitting crying alone! how is this?" It was Conrad who spoke; and placing himself beside the little girl, he listened with affectionate interest to her story: then kissing the tears from her cheek, said,

"Courage, Serena! look up: you see the dark days are past, and bright ones are in store. All things have prospered with me since we parted. I have watched at the door day by day, hoping to see you, and now we have met at last. You see how all things come right in the end. Now I have learned to be a gardener myself, and we will go home to my mother, and you shall cheer her old age with the smiles I so love to see on your bright face: they will come back again, I am sure, will they not?"

And as he spoke so kindly and fearlessly, they did come back; for a ray from the fairy sunbeam fell just upon her heart, and she smiled through her tears, and putting her hand in his, arose and went hopefully on.

The children went back to the good market-woman, who furnished them with a store of provisions; and then they set forth to travel hand in hand on the road where they first had met.

Conrad restored the crystal vase to Serena, but the fairy sunbeam had filled his heart with a glow that could not soon be effaced; and as they journeyed on, supporting each other's steps, and overcoming together the difficulties of the way, the sunbeam fell with unchanging brightness be-

fore them, and filled the breast of each with hopeful joy.

And when they arrived at length at the cottage of Conrad's mother, the good woman received them with open arms and glad tears of joy, while the fairy sunbeam fell upon the hearts of all.

The little boy and girl soon gained employment, and were beloved by all who came within their influence. The cottage became the abode of industry and content; and when years sped on, and Conrad and Serena were married, and had a cottage of their own, the crystal vase occupied an honorable place beside their books of devotion, and the fairy sunbeam filled their home as with a glory.

It is said that the crystal vase descended to many generations, but was broken at last, and the fairy sunbeam escaping, mingled itself with the glad sunshine that falls everywhere on earth. We can feel its influence still in the bright spring time; but happy is he whose heart knows the glow of the fairy sunbeam, for he carries perpetual summer in his breast.

And now," said Aunt Elsie, looking about her with a smile as she ceased, "the fairy sunbeam seems to have shed its influence over you all; therefore, you will certainly be able to tell me what it is called."

"I think it must be cheerfulness," suggested Edith, gently; "for there seems to be none but bright faces here."

"To be sure it is," cried the little girls, after a pause; "how dull we were not to find that out at once!"

"I like that story much," added Arthur, "for it is better at any time to be hopeful than sad."

"Why, it is the easiest thing in the world to be cheerful," cried Kate; "but I never thought before what a fine thing it is: it seems to make others happy, as well as one's self."

"It is not quite so easy to be always cheerful, as you seem to imagine, Kate," replied Fred Lee: "just wait a while until some trouble comes over you, and see whether your fairy sunbeam will shed so bright a light as Serena's."

"We will at least hope it may," now spoke Aunt Elsie; "for a cheerful spirit does much to

aid us in supporting the ills and trials which beset our path of life; but remember, it must be cheerfulness proceeding from a good conscience and pure intentions; like the fairy sunbeam, the vase which holds it must be crystal."

"I thank you so much for your pretty story. I was a little cloud this morning, but I mean to be a sunbeam now," whispered Lilie, drawing near Aunt Elsie.

"Aunt Elsie's lovely story must have contained a sunbeam," returned Clara, smiling, "since it has dispersed all clouds."

"There is sunshine both without and within now," cried Harry Wilder, as a bright ray parted the clouds, and beamed into the room.

The children had been too much interested to notice the rapid dispersion of the clouds, which now rolled back in heavy masses from the setting sun, whose golden beams fell upon the rain-drops that yet trembled in the flower-cups, and made them sparkle like precious gems.

The little party eagerly stepped forth on the broad piazza to enjoy the sunset.

"We shall have a fine day to-morrow," said Robert; "but it will be too damp in the woods for Aunt Elsie, I fear, after this soaking rain."

"We will postpone our day in the woods," answered Mabel, "until the sun has thoroughly dried the moisture from the ground."

"And in the mean time the fairy sunbeam of cheerfulness must dry up our tears of disappointment," added Harry Wilder.

"I am very much afraid that Dinah's nice pot-cheese will dry up before our pic-nic takes place; and that will be a disappointment which even my cheerfulness cannot overcome," said Fred Lee, dolefully.

The children laughed; and Edith replied,

"We will provide against such a disappointment, Fred, by having your favorite pot-cheese for tea, with Dinah's permission."

So saying, she hastened away, and the bell soon after summoned the little people to their evening repast.

Music and pleasant converse closed the day; and long after the sun had set behind the hills, the bright beam of cheerfulness shed a glow upon the happy group who were gathered in the dear old parlor.

CHAPTER III.

How gloriously the morning dawned upon the freshened earth! There was something exhilarating in the delicious cool breeze that came laden with the grateful incense of many flowers. The trees swayed their branches gently to and fro with a soft, rustling sound, while the little birds seemed to find new inspiration in the pleasant freshness of all things about them, and sung, in gleeful notes, their merriest songs.

Even the faithful cows expressed their delight in the green pastures by gently lowing; while the old barn-yard fathers crowed forth their shrill morning greetings with determined energy; and the motherly hens, followed by their noisy broods, went eagerly about, picking up the earth-worms which the rain had brought from the ground.

The spirit of joy was abroad upon the earth, and all things shared in its enlivening influence.

Our little party were gathered upon the piazza, well provided with sun-bonnets and thick shoes,

ready for a ramble, and undeterred by the prospect of muddy clothes or wet feet. Aunt Elsie stood smiling in the doorway; and, after many charges to avoid miry places, and take good heed to the little ones, the joyous group set forth, their merry voices and musical laughter chiming with the songs of the birds as they went.

It was dinner-time when they returned, looking rather travel-soiled, to be sure, but with glowing, happy faces, and elastic step, their bonnets fantastically decorated with small green branches, and their hands filled with wild-flowers.

There was a great demand for cool water and clean towels; and after a half-hour of preparation, the young party assembled in the dining-room, with white collars, neat dresses, and smooth hair, showing no trace of their recent long ramble, save in the flush that yet lingered upon some of the bright fair faces.

After dinner they all repaired to the piazza, which was their favorite resort in the afternoon. It was low and broad, extending around two sides of the house, with a wide flight of steps on either side, one of which led into the garden, and the other down upon the soft green lawn in front of the house. The pillars that supported its roof

were draped with sweet-brier, and the exquisite running-rose, whose hardy and beautiful flowers were sometimes seen even after snow covered the ground. In summer the long branches twined themselves about the balustrade, or hung in rich festoons between the pillars; while jessamine, honeysuckle, and other delicate creeping vines mingled their fragrant blossoms with the rich clusters of roses, and altogether formed graceful garlands which sent forth a delicious perfume on the breeze.

The children loved to train up the morning-glories and slender vines, whose fragile tendrils seemed to sway so helplessly about, seeking for something to which they might cling; and the boys tied pieces of strong twine to the balustrade, and fastened them up to nails which they drove in the edge of the roof, while the little girls carefully disentangled the fibres, and taught them to twine about the support thus provided.

The delicate vines were very apt scholars, and climbed with surprising rapidity up to the roof of the piazza, sending forth lateral shoots like arms, which they twined as they went, as if endeavoring to assist each other in their ascent, and then upon reaching the top, looked noddingly down,

as though they would say, "We have gone as far as we could, but would like to climb a little higher." Very ambitious vines they were, and some of them even scrambled over the roof, and came peeping in at the upper windows, forming, with their pretty fresh leaves, a lattice of wonderful beauty.

Aunt Elsie's favorite high-backed chair was placed just at the angle of the piazza; for seated there, the good old lady could feel the soft south wind as it came wafted over the garden, gathering sweet odors as it passed, while between the fine old trees that stood upon the lawn, she caught glimpses of the placid waters of the pond as it basked in the sunshine.

The children gathered upon the steps, or strolled through the garden, while Aunt Elsie indefatigably pursued her knitting-work.

"What a delightful ramble we have had," said Ellen Lee, as she seated herself at Aunt Elsie's feet; "every thing seems so fresh after the rain, and the woods smell so sweet!"

"Yes," added Edward Sutherland; "and did you ever see so many birds? how I wished for my bow and arrows!"

"They would not have done much execution,

Ned," answered Harry Wilder, with a smile: "you would need to be a second William Tell to shoot with an arrow a bird upon the wing."

"I am sure it would be very wicked to shoot them at all," returned Lilie; "when they seemed to be so very happy."

"It does, indeed, appear cruel sport," replied Aunt Elsie. "I once had a friend who wounded a robin in the wing, and the poor thing's piteous cries so moved his compassion, that he carried it home, where his wife bound up the wounded wing, bracing it with pieces of quill: they put the bird in a basket, and the little thing seemed grateful, and conscious of the kindness. It recovered at last, and they set it free; but it hovered about the house for a long while, eating the crumbs which were thrown out. Its companions wooed it away after a time, but my friend never shot a bird afterwards."

"I was wishing, this morning, to be a bird," cried merry Kate Lee; "it seemed so delightful to have wings, and be able to fly away up so far above the trees. I never thought of the chances of being shot, though; but after this I shall feel quite contented to walk on the ground, without fear of Ned's bow and arrows."

"We saw so many bright yellow butterflies," said Marian, "flying from flower to flower, that I quite longed to join them; they seemed to be playing some kind of game, for they darted after each other, and seemed to enjoy the chase so much."

"I don't join you in that wish," replied her brother Arthur, smoothing her bright hair, and smiling as he spoke; "for I hope to see my little sister Marian something more than a mere butterfly."

"It is surprising what an effect the rain has had," said Fred Lee, in a sentimental tone; "for my part, when I saw the quantities of speckled grasshoppers, with their long legs frisking about, I sighed to be one of *them!*"

"Now, Fred, you are quizzing us," returned Ellen, as all the children burst into a laugh; and even Aunt Elsie smiled at his droll manner. "You know very well you would rather be just the tormenting boy that you are; for if you were a grasshopper, we would tie a string to your leg, and try and bring you into better subjection."

"I submit to your better judgment, and am content to remain as I am—your humble cousin," rejoined Fred, bowing with mock solemnity.

"Well," said Grace, smiling, "since so many have told their wishes, I will add mine to the list; for I thought this morning I should like to be a flower, they seemed to enjoy the sunshine and the breeze so much."

"Not more than we did ourselves, I think," added Edith.

"No," replied Grace, "I do not mean that they did, but they looked so happy and beautiful."

> "Oh, who would wish to be a flower,
> To bloom and perish in an hour?"

shouted Fred.

"If they could think," said Aunt Elsie, "the hour would probably seem as long to them as a lifetime to us, for in it is comprised all they can know of cloud or sunshine."

"True, they have to bear the heat of noon and the drenching rains, and sometimes get broken off their stems by the wet," remarked Clara.

"Why, it seems to me, every thing has something to worry about," cried Kate. "The birds are in danger of being shot, the butterflies of being caught and spitted alive on great pins, and even the flowers must burn up in the sun, or be drowned in rain. I guess, after all, we are as

well off as any of them, though we have troubles, too."

"You are growing quite a philosopher, Kate," returned Fred, teasingly: "pray what have you to trouble you?"

"*You!*" rejoined the little girl, laughing; "and the grasshoppers may be thankful you are not among them."

Little Lilie took no part in the conversation, but laid her curly head upon Aunt Elsie's knee; she waited until a pause occurred, then drawing the old lady's face down to her own, whispered,

"I am so very tired, dear Aunt Elsie, won't you please tell us a story."

"But perhaps my other little people don't care about it, Lilie," she replied. "It is so fine that they may wish to walk."

"Oh, no, Aunt Elsie, dear Aunt Elsie, we had walking enough this morning," cried Kate, who overheard the remark; "nothing would be so delightful as a story."

The rest of the party joined in this opinion; and the indulgent old lady went into the house, and, opening the old bookcase, returned in a few moments with a manuscript in her hand.

The children, meanwhile, placed seats for them-

selves; and when Aunt Elsie was again comfortably seated, she read to them the story of

Ida's Experiment.

"Heigho! how pleasant it is to be out in the woods all day," sighed little Ida, as she threw herself upon a grassy bank by the brookside. "I don't see the use of being mewed up in the house these warm bright days, when the woods are so shady and cool. Heigho!"

Ida was a little girl who dearly loved the flowers and glad sunshine. She was only happy when roaming about at will, chasing the gayly-painted butterflies, or making, with her own merry voice, an echo to the song of the uncaged birds.

Very pleasant it would have been to pass whole days in this manner, but Ida had duties to perform—as who has not? What is there in the whole earth so insignificant as to say, with truth, "I am of no use?" Every dew-drop has its peculiar mission to fulfil; and each tiny snow-flake falls to the ground to assist in accomplishing some great purpose.

But Ida never thought of all this. Her mother, she knew, talked to her of duties, and often kept her in doors, performing disagreeable tasks, which seemed to the little girl of trifling importance, when she would fain have been out in the fresh green fields. She knew not that her first duty was obedience, and therefore was frequently ill-tempered and perverse.

It was a lovely summer afternoon, and Ida, having finished her tasks, was permitted to go out into the fields. The day had been intensely warm, but now a soft gentle breeze sprang up, and the flowers began to lift their drooping heads that had shrunk from the bright gaze of the sun. Little Ida ran about, delighted with the sense of freedom from restraint; but at length, becoming weary, she threw herself upon the grass and sighed, "Heigho!"

"Oh, dear," murmured the little girl, after a long revery; "how I wish there was no such thing as work in the world; at any rate, for a little girl like me! I don't see that I am of any use, and yet mother will keep me in all day. I wish I could live out of doors always. Pretty daisies," she continued, addressing a tuft of flowers that grew at her feet, "do you know I envy

you? for you have no duties to perform, and nothing in the world to do but to live in the sunshine and look charming. Yes, I wish I could be like you."

It was certainly very strange, but just as Ida spoke these words, the little daisies began nodding to her in the drollest manner imaginable; and then she saw that the flowers were lovely little faces: the stems and leaves assumed human forms, and soon they were a little troop of fairies, who joined hands and danced about her, singing, in soft musical tones,

> "Sisters bright make room, make room,
> A new flower comes to bud and bloom.
> To weep with the rain-drops, to smile with the sun,
> And wither, and fade, when her task is done."

As they circled round, repeating these words, Ida felt herself descending into the ground, the song died away upon her ear, and she remained in utter darkness. The little girl did not feel at all frightened, but wondered, very much, what would happen next. She waited a while in expectation, and then cried out, "I am tired of staying here in the dark. I want to see the light."

"Be quiet," said a tiny voice close at her side, "and wait until the snow melts a little, and the earth is thawed. You could not get out now if you were to try."

Ida turned around in astonishment at this speech, but she could see nothing in the dark; so she asked,

"Who are you, and how came you here? I am a little girl, and my name is Ida."

"What a droll conceit," replied the voice, with a merry little laugh. "You are nothing more nor less than a flower-seed, like myself. By and by we will come up out of the ground, and bloom in the sunshine."

"But how long will it be before we leave this gloomy place?" asked the little girl, who now began to realize that she had gained her wish, and was actually to be a flower; "I can't say that I like being a seed at all."

"Why, you cannot be a flower without first being a seed," returned the other. "There are plenty of us here, waiting for the Spring to set us free: don't be impatient, she will come in good time."

Ida remained quiet for some time, and then

again asked, "How can you lie so contentedly in this dark place?"

"It is our duty," answered the tiny voice, shortly; for the little girl's talking annoyed him.

"Why! do you use that hateful word, too?" she replied. "I thought the flowers had no duties; but I am so tired of staying here: how do you know the Spring will come? are you sure?"

"We trust," returned the other. And to all her complaints Ida received no other reply.

At length she heard a strange musical sound, and found that the seeds were slowly forcing their way through the earth. She gladly moved upward, too; and so impatient was she, that she was the first to burst from the ground, and look about her.

"I am so glad to get out of that ugly prison," soliloquized the little girl. "How pleasant and warm the sunshine feels, though the snow has not quite melted yet. It is so droll: I see that I am surrounded by tiny green leaves, and yet I know that I am Ida, still. Well, I wonder what will happen next."

Presently a cold wind blew over her, and in the night came frost and pinched her leaves; so that poor Ida looked quite drooping for several

days, but she gradually revived; and then, when she found herself really expanding into a flower, her delight knew no bounds.

"What a lovely pink color I am!" she said to herself. "Every one will admire me, I am sure. I think I am even prettier than my neighbors. How delightful it is to be a flower! no lessons to learn, and nothing at all to do but bloom and be admired!" And she lifted her head proudly, and swayed gracefully upon the breeze.

"Take care," said one of her neighbors, as he bent over towards her: "if you thrust yourself so far out upon the road some one will trample upon you."

Ida withdrew her head in alarm. "How do you know we will not be crushed even here?" she asked, anxiously.

"We trust," replied the other, and then was still.

"It is so very cold," murmured the little girl, as she folded her leaves tightly over her breast one frosty night. "Why do you not wait till warmer weather before you bloom?"

"We come when Spring calls us, to give sign of her approach," said the other.

"But although it is dark in the ground, it is at

least warm," she rejoined. "Why should you obey the Spring?"

"Because it is our duty," said the little flower, as he closed his eyes.

"Duty, duty," murmured Ida, as she fell asleep: but the next morning, when she awoke, she found herself covered with dew-drops, that sparkled like diamonds in the sun.

"How beautiful I am to-day!" she exclaimed in delight. "See how lovely my leaves appear, shining through these diamonds that adorn them: every one must behold me with admiration now."

As she spoke, a farmer's boy came whistling along; but although she thrust herself so far forward that his foot brushed off some of the diamond dew-drops, he did not notice her in the least, but strolled carelessly on.

By and by the sun climbed high up in the sky, and looked down upon the flowers so steadily with his flaming eye, that they quailed and shrunk beneath his scorching beams. Poor little Ida felt unable to support herself. Her head dropped languidly, and she could scarcely breathe. There was not the slightest air stirring in that sultry noon, and still the great sun sent down his burning rays upon the earth.

"I shall die," murmured the little girl. "If I had known how the flowers suffer with heat, I never would have wished to be one of them. How pleasant and cool it is now in mother's shaded room, if I only was there again; but now I shall die."

A flower, who grew at her side, overheard her murmuring, and spoke, though faintly, for she too was drooping in the sun.

"Yes, we often wither thus with heat; but then, you know, we must do our duty: we shall revive at night; and though we suffer, yet we trust."

The last words were scarcely heard by poor Ida, who sank exhausted to the earth.

Presently heavy black clouds rushed across the sky, and shut out the beams of the sun; and then plash, plash came the large rain-drops upon the leaves and the parched earth; and then the flowers lifted their languid heads, and felt revived. But the rain poured down still faster, until they were forced to bend beneath its rushing weight, and little Ida was now in great fear of being drowned. The wind tossed the flowers about most rudely, and they bruised themselves against each other: some of them were torn from their stems

by the force of the shower, and poor Ida trembled in affright.

"Oh, this is more dreadful than all," she cried. "I shall certainly be broken to pieces in this tempest. Why should flowers be so exposed, and suffer so much?"

"We do our duty," was the murmured reply that reached her, borne on the blast, "and for the rest we trust."

At last the rain ceased, the clouds began to separate, and the sun again smiled down upon the earth. The birds left their nests, and sang joyously, and all things revived. Little Ida, though bruised and shorn of some green leaves, yet felt very much refreshed. But there remained one rain-drop in her heart: the wind had blown a long branch, thick with clustering leaves, just before her, and the setting sun could not reach her behind the leafy screen. So while the other flowers were gayly lifting their heads, and basking in his beam, poor Ida trembled beneath the weight of the rain-drop.

"How unfortunate I am," she sighed, repiningly. "The sun has dried all the rain from the other flowers, while I must sink beneath this weight through all the long night."

Then she folded her leaves and slept; but when the morning sun gleamed down once more, the rain-drop shone like a diamond upon her breast.

When the scorching noonday beam again shone down, the flowers paled and withered as before; but the drop which rested in Ida's breast strengthened and refreshed her, so that she did not shrink from the sun's ray, but lifted her head firmly. The moisture dried up from her heart, but little Ida had learned a new truth.

"Ah! I understand now," she exclaimed, "that what seems to be very disagreeable at first, is all for our good after all. Had it not been for that drop of rain, I might have withered in the sun. After this, so long as I live, I will remember to do my duty, and trust."

All the flowers applauded loudly at this. And as the humming, rustling noise increased, a strange thrill passed through little Ida: her bright leaves fell to the ground, and lo and behold, she was lying upon the grass at the brookside, with the tuft of daisies blooming at her side!

Her first impulse was to bend over the water, and there she beheld the reflection of her own astonished face. There could be no doubt she *had* been a flower, but was now little Ida again.

"You have taught me a fine lesson," she cried, turning to the daisies, "and one that I shall not soon forget. I am quite contented to remain just the little girl that I am, and shall never wish to be a flower again. Don't you approve my decision?"

But the little daisies looked perfectly unconscious, and stared steadily up at the sky, never vouchsafing so much as a nod in reply.

"Oh, it is all very well for you to make believe you don't understand me," persisted little Ida; "but I shall not forget your advice. we do our duty, and trust, "she whispered, with a triumphant air. "Do you remember the words?"

But the perverse little daisies did not seem to hear, and never even moved a leaf.

"Well, well," laughed Ida, as she ran home; "if you don't remember them, I do, and mean to live after them besides."

And so she did; and though she loved the woods and flowers as well as ever, she never murmured at her tasks; and so grew to be a good and happy girl. But though she often stopped to talk to the daisies, not one of them ever deigned a reply; they had evidently cut her acquaintance.

"What a droll story!" exclaimed Kate, as Aunt Elsie concluded: "I like it so much, I declare I almost envy Ida her experiment, after all."

"For my part I am quite content to profit by her experience," returned Ellen.

"The lesson it teaches may profit us all, I think," added Arthur: "to do our duty, and trust the result to Providence."

"And to be content with the part assigned us," said Grace. "I am decidedly of Ida's opinion now, and shall never wish to be a flower again."

"Who would ever think of learning wisdom from the flowers?" remarked Robert.

"Why not?" returned Edith, smiling. "As the bee gathers honey from them, may we not also get wisdom?"

"Wisdom is not always like honey, though," replied Fred; "for when bought by experience, it is apt to be bitter."

"There you are mistaken, Fred," answered Harry: "it is the experience that is bitter, and not the wisdom: it is the fault of the bee, if the

honey is not properly cleared; but we ought to be very wise with so many teachers about us."

He looked towards Aunt Elsie as he spoke, and the old lady said:

"We ought, indeed, Harry, for it seems to be ordained by the Creator, that all things should constantly teach us the ways of wisdom and truth. Nature in her many voices is ever sending lessons to the heart, and you remember the words of Solomon, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise.' Since, then, we may learn great truths from even the insects and the flowers, let us not fail to improve the lessons they teach; but earnestly strive to walk with that wisdom, 'whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.'"

CHAPTER IV.

"Come, Robert, awake," cried Edward Sutherland, arousing his brother early one fine summer morning: "this is the day we are to spend at Mr. Helme's, and if you don't hurry you will be too late for breakfast, which is an hour earlier, you know."

Robert started hastily up. "I had well-nigh overslept myself," he said; "but what a glorious morning it is! we shall have a grand time, I expect."

The boys hastened to dress themselves in their good suits, and had scarcely finished when the breakfast bell sounded, and they hurried down stairs, where they found their companions all neatly dressed, and full of pleasant anticipations for the day.

Breakfast was soon over, and then the old family coach stood at the door; but large as it was, it could scarcely accommodate all the little people, and so one of the farm wagons was put in re-

quisition, and into this the boys gayly sprang, while the little girls occupied the coach.

Aunt Elsie was not of the party: she preferred remaining quietly at home, as she knew that her young people were all well bred, and would behave with perfect propriety. The younger children were under the guidance of Edith and Harry, who she felt satisfied would restrain them, should their mirthfulness threaten to pass due bounds.

The young party were on their way to pass the day at Rookwood, a beautiful place some five miles distant from Woodleigh. The owner, Mr. Helme, was an old friend of Aunt Elsie's, and a most excellent man. He was a bachelor of unobtrusive habits, and had the reputation of being eccentric. One of his peculiarities was a fondness for children: he delighted in gathering them about him, and making them happy. He had several nieces and nephews, who alternately resided with him, and his large and elegant house was usually filled with young company. Aunt Elsie's little people were always great favorites, for he knew none would be invited to pass the time with her, who were not well behaved and intelligent; but little Frank Field was very dear

to the good old man, and he with Aunt Elsie frequently spoke of adopting the little orphaned brother and sister between them. Aunt Elsie already loved little Lilie as her own, and Mr. Helme liked to have Frank always with him. The children's relatives, however, would have to be consulted; but the greatest obstacle to this plan was the separation of Frank from his sister, to whom he was devotedly attached.

We will leave kind Mr. Helme and the dear Aunt Elsie to think over these things, while we go with the juvenile party to Rookwood.

Some of the children had never visited there before; and many were the exclamations of delight that burst from the group, as they beheld so many new beauties.

It was, indeed, as lovely a spot as nature, aided by taste and wealth, could make. The house itself was large, well arranged, and elegantly furnished; but the surrounding grounds were the owner's just pride, and the admiration of all who visited them.

The garden was very large, and tastefully laid out in different-shaped beds, with white gravelled walks between. The flowers were of the choicest kind, cultivated to the highest state of perfec-

tion; and so chosen, that from the earliest dawn of spring, until winter had fairly come and frozen the ground quite hard, the garden was always bright with the flowers of the season; and it was easy to cull from it a bouquet of rich and varied flowers.

In the centre of some of the flower-beds were graceful fountains, that sent sparkling drops of spray upon the plants in grateful showers; and in one part of the grounds you came unexpectedly upon a little pond, where numbers of gold and silver fish sported in undisturbed security, while an old tree that had stood the storms of centuries, bent its gnarled branches protectingly above.

Then there were fine orchards of fruit, and several acres of woodland, through which many little streams rippled softly amid the dried leaves; and what particularly attracted the children's attention, was a fine clump of boxwood, that tradition said had stood there since long before the Revolution, and beneath whose shade a wounded soldier had concealed himself from pursuit. The little birds built their nests among its foliage now, and several of the children seated themselves beneath the thick branches, which formed quite an arbor above them.

The young party had so much to see and admire, that they were surprised when luncheon was announced; and following their kind entertainer they came to a long arbor, covered with grape-vines, and here the noonday repast was laid. There were plenty of rich ripe strawberries and sweet fresh cream, with other and more substantial good things, of which the children partook heartily, for the morning ride and long stroll had wonderfully increased their appetites.

Then afterwards they repaired to the smooth green lawn, where a fine swing was erected, and a small target placed, with plenty of bows and arrows for the boys to try their skill. In a small summer-house were found grace-rings, battledores, balls, and jumping-ropes, which the young party severally appropriated, and were soon eagerly engaged in the various games.

They did not leave until after tea, and a ride home by moonlight completed what had truly been a day of pleasure.

The following day was showery; but the children were so full of bright recollections of yesterday's enjoyment, that they did not desire to walk out, but continually dwelt upon the many delightful things which had occurred in their previous visit.

"Such a day of enjoyment as we had!" cried Kate, who was always the first to speak: "every thing happened just as it ought; and Mr. Helme was so kind!"

"It was, indeed, a most delightful visit," returned Mabel, "and Rookwood is a lovely spot; there is so much taste displayed everywhere."

"It is the loveliest place in the world, I am sure," cried Ellen and Marian, both in a breath.

"Except dear Woodleigh," returned little Lilie, "which I love so much better. I am sure it is quite as pleasant as Rookwood."

"But not quite so grand, Lilie," said Robert. "What large rooms Mr. Helme has there; and so richly furnished, too! I almost envy him."

"I should like to have permission to read the books in his library," returned Arthur: "he has many valuable works, and must be a man of taste and education."

"And I never should weary of walking through that beautiful garden," added Grace. "I never saw so many lovely flowers."

"Yes," added Clara; "and do you know, Aunt Elsie, they are so arranged that when one flower fades, another opens, so that one or the other is constantly blooming?"

"It was Linnæus, I believe, who once invented a dial that told the time, by the opening and closing of the flowers. Mr. Helme has followed his idea," remarked Arthur.

"And a lovely idea it was," returned Edith. "Do you remember those beautiful lines of Mrs. Hemans, the last verse of which is,—

> 'Oh, let us live, so that flower by flower,
> Shutting in turn may leave
> A lingerer still for the twilight hour,
> A charm for the shaded eve.'"

"Well," cried Fred, "I confess to liking the bows and arrows, and balls, quite as well as any thing else; but as for Frank, when I wanted him to join in a game, he had stolen off and was nowhere to be found; but I believe Harry caught him afterwards, sitting alone in the woods. You are a queer fellow, Frank: you don't care for play like other boys."

"Yes, I do," replied little Frank, slightly coloring; "but you know, Fred, I am not so strong as you are. I was tired yesterday; and besides, I like to sit alone in the woods, and listen to the wind among the leaves."

"So do I, Frank," added Arthur, with a kind smile.

"Yes," interrupted Harry Wilder, "and so do I, although I am not given to day-dreams; but I think there never was any thing more glorious than the sunset-sky yesterday, and nothing more delightful than the stroll Franky and I took through the woods, homeward."

"I am very glad you enjoyed yourselves so well, my dear children," now spoke Aunt Elsie, who had been an amused and interested listener, as the little group expressed their several tastes; "and I trust your visit was a source of equal pleasure to my good friend Mr. Helme, who must have taken every trouble to afford you gratification."

"That he did," cried all at once.

"He is so merry," added Kate; "and swung me *so* high!"

"Yes, and joined in our games of ball and battledore," continued Edward.

"He is very kind and gentle, besides," said Frank: "he talked a good while with me, and showed me many books and pictures."

"He must be very rich," remarked Robert, "to have so many elegant things. Is he not, Aunt Elsie?"

"Yes," returned the old lady; "he is a man of wealth; and, what is more, he is what is called a 'self-made' man; that is, he earned all that he now possesses: he was once a poor boy."

"Was he?" cried all the children; and Harry said—

"He must be very talented, then, to have made so much money in so short a time, for he is not very old now; or else, perhaps, he speculated largely."

"Neither," replied Aunt Elsie. "I have known him all my life, and he has never been accounted very talented; nor has he been what is called a speculator, though doubtless he invested his money to the best advantage. No, the 'little brown seed' has been at the bottom of all his wonderful success."

"That has something to do with a fairy story, I know," cried Kate, exultingly.

"Is the little brown seed in the old portfolio?" asked Lilie, starting up with dancing eyes; "and may I go and find it?"

"Do, pray, Aunt Elsie," implored several voices: "let us find out the secret of Mr. Helme's wealth."

"So that we may profit by it," cried Fred Lee.

"Dear Aunt Elsie, allow me the pleasure," he continued, and darting into the room, returned in a moment with the old portfolio, which, with a low bow, he presented.

Aunt Elsie smiled, and opening the portfolio, selected a manuscript, saying, as she unfolded it, this is the story of

The Golden Root,

AND

The Little Brown Seed.

A poor man was dying, and beside him stood his two sons weeping bitterly, for they knew that after their father was taken away, they should be quite alone in the world.

The poor man pitied the grief of his children, and tried to comfort them: then taking a small box from beneath his pillow, said faintly,

"My sons, this box contains all the possessions I have to leave you: in it you will find a golden root, and a little brown seed, either of which, if properly planted and watered, will grow into a great tree, and finally make you a fortune.

"To you, Hansel, as the elder, I give the golden root: if planted in the right soil, it will grow rapidly, and bear golden fruit more beautiful than jewels, and far more precious beside: while the little brown seed, which falls to your share, Wilhelm, though it will need much care, and grow more slowly than your brother's root, will eventually produce rich good fruit; less brilliant than Hansel's, but very valuable.

"It will be well, my dear children, if you plant your trees side by side, and cultivate them together; it will improve them both; but should you ever determine to separate, you have each the power to win prosperity."

So saying, the good father closed his eyes, and spoke no more.

After the grief of the brothers had subsided, they opened the box, and Hansel eagerly grasped the golden root, which was to bring him such good fortune. It was apparently a piece of solid gold, of an unfinished shape, and could be easily bent in the hand. Wilhelm greatly admired his brother's treasure, and then earnestly sought in the box for the little brown seed. It was some time before he could find it; but he espied it at last lying in the corner of the box, and looking for all the

world like an insignificant peppercorn. As he placed it on the palm of his hand with rather a disappointed air, Hansel burst into a loud laugh, and exclaimed—

"It will be many a long day before your treasure brings a fortune, Wilhelm: why, that tiny seed can never grow into a tree."

Wilhelm made no reply, though inclined to agree with his brother, and he was tempted to envy Hansel, who exultingly displayed his golden root.

"It is something to possess, even should I never plant it," he cried: "every one will think me rich who sees this lump of gold."

"But it is better to be rich, than merely to seem so," returned his brother. "You had better follow our father's advice, and plant the root immediately: then you will reap the golden fruit all the sooner, you know."

But Hansel thought he had time enough, and so went around among the neighbors exhibiting his golden root, which was to bring him a fortune. The neighbors all admired it exceedingly, and some envied him, but others said,

"Hansel gives himself high airs on account of the golden root; but what use will it be if not planted in time?"

Meanwhile, Wilhelm arose very early, and sought a spot in the miserable little garden patch, where the morning sun fell warm and bright: here, after thoroughly digging up the earth, and breaking the lumps with his spade, he carefully planted the little brown seed, and fenced it around with tall pointed sticks to prevent it being scratched up or trodden upon; he then watered it plentifully, and feeling satisfied that he had performed his part, sat down to rest.

Presently Hansel joined him.

"So you have planted your seed already," he said. "Well, it will take so long to grow, if it ever does, at all, that you do right to be up betimes. However, my root may as well be planted also: since you have already had some experience, Wilhelm, suppose you plant it for me."

"With all my heart," replied the other, and forthwith dug up the earth in a spot which Hansel selected, and prepared the ground to receive the precious root: he then planted and watered it, as he had previously done his own.

The two boys could not live upon air while the wonderful trees were growing; and therefore obtained employment, which just sufficed to bring them a scanty support. Wilhelm worked

steadily: he knew it would be a long time before his tree bore any fruit, even if it grew and flourished; and in the mean time he must take care of himself. Hansel, on the contrary, often indulged in idle dreams of the wonderful fortune his golden root would bring, and was far less industrious than his brother.

Every evening after his work was done, Wilhelm carefully watered the little brown seed, and for several days Hansel did the same: neither root nor seed, however, gave any signs of life, and Hansel grew careless, but Wilhelm persevered.

Upon going into the garden one morning, Wilhelm, to his great delight, observed a tiny green shoot forcing its way through the ground. He uttered an exclamation of pleasure, and called his brother to look. When Hansel saw that the little seed had surely sprouted, he ran to his golden root, expecting to find quite a tall shoot there; but to his great chagrin, there was no appearance of life about it, and the ground was baked dry and hard with the heat of the sun.

He felt that this was owing to his own carelessness, and hastened to water the root, consoling himself with the reflection, that when once fairly started, it would soon outstrip his brother's.

A few days after he was rewarded by seeing a little green sprout coming up, and now felt quite elated with joy. Wilhelm, meanwhile, never neglected his little plant; he kept the earth carefully loosened about the roots, and did not allow any weeds to grow near it; while each morning and night he watered it plentifully. With such care it soon grew to be a thrifty plant, and began to shoot forth leaves. Though full of hope for the future, Wilhelm never allowed himself to neglect his work, but remained as humble and industrious as ever.

One day a sudden shower arose, accompanied with hail and a violent wind. Wilhelm was at work at the time, but he trembled for his precious plant, which was yet too young to withstand the fury of the storm. When evening came, he hurried home, and found his worst fears realized: the wind had snapped off its leafy top, and the hailstones beaten it to the ground.

Tears sprang to the boy's eyes at this sudden frustration of his hopes; but he wasted no time in idle grief. Tenderly raising the bruised stem, he supported it between splinters of wood, making a framework on which it could rest, while he carefully banked up the earth about its roots.

After a little time the plant revived again, and soon put forth fresh leaves and shoots.

Hansel, meantime, was far from being as careful as Wilhelm: he thought his brother took unnecessary trouble, and flattered himself that since the golden root had started, it would grow without farther care. He watered it irregularly, sometimes drenching it with wet, and at others allowing it to droop with thirst, while weeds choked its growth. The plant grew but slowly in consequence, and could not compare with Wilhelm's for freshness or strength. Hansel was quite provoked at this; and not attributing his failure to want of proper care, imagined that the spot in which the root was planted could not be a favorable one, and so transplanted it to another corner of the garden. This, of course, retarded its growth for some time longer, and he had the mortification of seeing his brother's plant far surpass his own.

Mortified that his boasted golden root should be thus outdone by an insignificant brown seed, he went at last diligently to work, and soon, by watchful care, the golden root shot vigorously up, and spread into a tree of surpassing beauty. After a time tiny buds appeared among the cluster-

ing leaves, and then Hansel's joy knew no bounds. He felt himself already rich, and passed day after day beneath the shade of the tree, watching the swelling buds, and fancying he could detect the bright golden hue of the fruit shining through them.

While Hansel was thus prosperously progressing, poor Wilhelm was doomed to trouble and disappointment. His tree had scarcely recovered from the shock of the hailstorm, when a severe hurricane wrested it from the earth by the roots, and flung it, broken and bruised, upon the ground. But Wilhelm would not allow himself to be disheartened: he sought a more sheltered spot, and replanted his tree with the greatest care: he was forced to lop off several of the finest branches, which were broken by the fall; and Hansel laughed when he saw the maimed and unsightly thing, and compared it with his own stately and luxuriant tree.

But still Wilhelm kept up good courage, and tended the tree with unwearied patience. He was rewarded in the end by seeing it again flourish, until it grew handsome and healthy; not so remarkably beautiful as his brother's, but still giving promise of abounding in fruit. But though

now strong, and constantly growing, it gave no sign of budding; and it was not until very long after the golden fruit began to glow amid the leaves of Hansel's tree, that little buds appeared upon Wilhelm's.

Week after week rolled by, and people flocked from far and near to wonder at and admire Hansel's astonishing tree. Many of the buds had withered and fallen off, to be sure, but the few golden apples that remained were marvellously beautiful: nothing like them had ever been seen in that country before.

As for poor Wilhelm, his tree attracted no notice at all: it looked like a very fine apple-tree, but nothing more; and many were the gibes and jests which his brother heaped upon him for the time and labor he had spent in rearing it. To all this Wilhelm made no reply: he saw that the fruit it bore promised to be very abundant; and although of slow growth, gave evidence of perfection in its kind: so he worked quietly and hopefully on.

It would have been wiser for Hansel had he spent less time in admiring, and more in cultivating his tree. While he was vainly speculating upon the fortune it would bring him, or idly boast-

ing of his great possession, the clustering foliage was completely veiling the fruit from the warm sun; and thus, when he expected to see an abundance of precious golden apples, they withered and dropped off as if blasted, until only one remained. This one Hansel watched with a miser's anxiety, as day after day it ripened and glowed in the sun like burnished gold; and his desire to pluck it became so intense that he could wait no longer, and one day pulled it from the stem, anxious to determine the value of his treasure.

The golden apple was indeed beautiful, and seemed very valuable besides. Every one praised it, and pronounced it pure gold; but none was more delighted than the unselfish Wilhelm. He was never weary of admiring the precious fruit, and encouraging his brother to take it to a dealer in rare articles, sure that it would realize a large sum.

Hansel followed the advice, and departed, full of high hopes; but he returned after a time, quite disappointed. The dealer had found many defects in the golden apple. It was by no means so perfect as some others which he had purchased long before: it had been plucked too soon. He bought it, however, for a less sum than Hansel expected

it to bring; and advised him to cultivate the tree carefully, as it would in time no doubt yield abundant and perfect fruit.

All this was perfectly true; but Hansel declared the soil did not suit the tree, and that was the reason of his failure: so hastily digging up the golden root, he bade his brother good-by, saying he would return in a gold coach, and loaded with honors; and then set forth to find a fitting place to plant his treasure.

He travelled very far until he came to a pleasant country, where the sun seemed always to shine, and no tempests or storm-clouds obscured the sky. Here Hansel purchased a small plot of ground, and planted his golden root. It flourished astonishingly; and as he made no secret of possessing it, the fame of the wonderful tree soon reached the ears of a good man, who owned one himself that had already brought him a fortune. Hansel was so proud of his tree that he desired this man to come and see it. He did so; and found Hansel reclining beneath its shade, idly enjoying its beauty.

"My young friend," said his guest, "your tree is certainly very beautiful, but it wants pruning;

it is too luxuriant: you had better cut off all those long branches."

"What! and thus destroy my tree," retorted the other, angrily. "I should then have no fruit."

"Your fruit, on the contrary, will then attain perfection," replied his friend, mildly. "Believe me, I speak from experience when I say that trees of this kind need constant and unwearied care. Year after year the fruit dropped from my tree unripened, before I discovered that my own ignorant carelessness was the cause: by properly cultivating it, I have since reaped an abundant harvest."

"Well, what must I do?" asked Hansel sullenly, vexed to find any thing more was essential.

"You must prune these branches," replied his adviser, "and strip off some of these luxuriant leaves: they are beautiful doubtless, but they keep the sun from the fruit. Then you must loosen the earth from the roots frequently, and keep it free from weeds; and above all, you must water it bountifully, and not allow any poisonous vines or insects to molest it. If you cultivate your tree properly, you will have very little time to repose under its shade, until the fruit begins to

ripen, and then in its perfection you will find your full reward."

But Hansel listened with impatient scorn to all his judicious guest advised.

"Of what great value is the golden root," he exclaimed, passionately, "if it requires so much time and labor! Why, my brother Wilhelm's little brown seed grew into a tree by dint of constant care; but with this golden root, I should indeed be a simpleton to make myself a slave, toiling early and late, when it flourishes so well without: no, no, it might have been all very well in your case; but my root is something superior, and I assure you needs no further attention than what I already give it."

His adviser smiled in scornful pity at the young man's arrogance and folly, and left him to his indolence and gay visions of golden harvests to come.

But, alas! for Hansel's wilful pride, the tree budded in time, but nearly all the fruit dropped off withered and blasted as before: what remained was stunted and imperfect, and he found difficulty in selling it even at a low price: he succeeded in doing so at last, however, and in a fit of shame and mortification, for he had boasted loudly of

his intention to excel his neighbor, he pulled up the tree, and taking the golden root, hastened from the city. But as he passed his kind adviser's garden, he saw his golden fruit hanging abundant, and glowing in its ripening freshness. With an envious sigh, Hansel turned aside, and pursued his way.

After journeying many days, he reached a country where the golden root seemed entirely unknown, and where the people beheld it with astonishment and delight. They thought Hansel must be some great personage to possess so great a treasure, and overwhelmed him with servile attentions.

Hansel loved flattery; he felt sure that his golden root would flourish here: so he sojourned among these people, who gladly allowed him land wherein to plant his wonderful tree.

Though the young man had scorned the advice of his good friend at the time, he now remembered, and determined to avail himself of it; he therefore attended his tree with extreme care, and was rewarded by seeing it grow more rapidly than ever: the buds expanded finely, and the fruit ripened and glowed in the sun. The king of the country at length heard of this wonderful

tree, and sent for Hansel that he might question him. The young man knew the value of a king's favor, and plucking one of the ripest apples, presented it to the monarch. The king was highly delighted with this costly and beautiful gift: he ordered it to be placed in his treasury, and the giver to be installed in apartments at the palace.

Hansel was now in the meridian splendor of his fortune. The favorite of a king, fawned upon by servile flatterers, and possessing a tree which yielded him unbounded treasure: what more could he desire? He might, indeed, have been happy, could he but have learned to be prudent. But intoxicated with success, he abandoned himself to pleasure, taking no farther heed to the tree than to pluck the golden fruit as it ripened: he scattered his wealth lavishly, never reflecting that the source of all his present gratification and honors would perish if not cared for.

Hansel awoke at last to a sense of his folly: he had incurred debts, trusting to the golden fruit for the means of repayment; but upon visiting his tree, he found it withered; the few golden apples that yet clung to its branches were shrivelled, and their brightness sullied forever. The anxious youth tried every means to restore the

tree in vain; it had perished in the intolerable heat of many scorching noons.

Despair filled Hansel's breast: he feared to return to the palace where clamorous creditors awaited him; the source of his wealth was destroyed, and to his bewildered mind there seemed but one course left; he dug up the golden root, and fled, he scarce knew whither.

He found himself at last in a vast forest, far removed from the bustle of life, and resolved to plant his golden root here, and rear it amid this solitude. Unhappily for Hansel, he had lost the power of pursuing this plan. The pampered slave of indulgence was all unfit for a hardy forest life; he sunk beneath fatigue; and finding it impossible to cultivate his tree, sought out a lonely cave, and burying the golden root therein, sat moodily down to brood over his disappointments, and attribute them all to his peculiar ill-fortune, rather than his indolence and pride.

Some time passed in this manner, and then Hansel, weary of solitude, began to think of his brother: a yearning desire to see him once more crept into his heart, and would not rest until satisfied; so once more unearthing his golden root, now tarnished and corroded, he put it in his

bosom, and turned his face towards his early home.

During all this time Wilhelm had remained at home, cultivating his tree with most assiduous care; early and late, through sunshine and storm, he labored perseveringly on: frost came and nipped the buds; keen blasts snapped the newly formed fruit from their stems: still Wilhelm felt no discouragement,—knew no despair.

The neighbors all wondered when they saw his cheerful and unwearied skill, and said it was a pity the golden root had not fallen to his share; but Wilhelm felt no emotion of envy or regret; he supposed that his brother was living in splendid luxury, and had ceased to think of one so humble as himself.

Meanwhile his tree grew and flourished, the rich fruit ripened, and hung lusciously red and tempting among the leaves. As he was busied loosening the earth one day, an apple broke from its stem, and fell at his feet: Wilhelm took it up; it was fresh and inviting, exhaling a delightful fragrance; he put it to his lips, and a cry of surprise escaped him: never before had he tasted such delicious fruit—cool, fragrant, and spicy, leaving nothing to desire. Wilhelm looked up

with grateful pleasure to the tree, among whose green foliage the fruit shone like rubies.

"Your apples are not golden," he soliloquized; "but they are better, for they are good; pleasant to the eye and delicious to the taste. It will be strange, indeed, if I find not a ready sale for them."

He hastened to gather the now fully ripened fruit, and carry it to the adjoining market-town, where it brought even more than his most sanguine hopes had anticipated. The fame of the wonderful tree filled all the country round, and from far-off cities orders came for supplies of the rare and delightful fruit. With all his success, Wilhelm was neither elated nor neglectful: when the season of bearing was past, the tree received just the same attention as before, and rewarded him with a still more abundant supply.

Thus it grew and flourished each year, with increased vigor, until its branches spread completely over the unobtrusive yet substantial cottage which Wilhelm had built beneath its shade. The roots spread far beneath the earth, and sent up young saplings in every direction, until instead of one, Wilhelm found himself surrounded by an orchard of rare and beautiful

trees, each bending beneath the weight of fruit it bore.

He needed assistance now in rearing them: so he hired workmen, took a wife, and became prosperous and happy. Yet although the master of such vast wealth, he never neglected his proper duty of directing it, and remained always simple and unpretending, respected and beloved by all.

Wilhelm sat beside his door one pleasant summer evening. The branches of his first tree, the tree of the little brown seed, waved gently above his head, laden with luscious fruit. Orchards of similar trees surrounded him, and the delicious perfume of the fruit they bore came blended with the breath of the summer breeze. Every thing upon which his eye rested was his own: all had sprung from that one little brown seed, planted in hopefulness and nursed with patient care. Wilhelm sat and mused; he was grateful, happy, and content.

Presently a feeble, wayworn figure stood before him.

"You do not remember me, Wilhelm," spoke a hollow, desponding voice; "nor should I have known you, brother, but the praise of your name

has reached me on my way, even as the perfume of your fruit is now wafted over us."

Wilhelm started up: he clasped his brother in his arms: he wept for very joy. And then new milk and wine were brought, and the table piled with the inviting fruit; and after Hansel had eaten and refreshed himself, he asked his brother about his success. Wilhelm told him all, simply and truthfully; but the haggard look and sunken eye of Hansel forbade questioning in return. He leaned his arm heavily upon the table, and rested his face in his hands.

"And *I*," he said at length, in a tone of deep self-abasement, "upon whom my father bestowed his choicest gift, have wasted and destroyed it. With the means of being both happy and useful, I have passed a life of vice and folly; and now my golden root is worthless, and I a homeless outcast."

"Say not so," cried his brother, warmly; "Hansel, say not so! One roof shall again shelter us, as in our early days; and while my little brown seed yields full support for both, we will plant once more your golden root, and it will yet bear golden fruit. Don't shake your head so sadly; I know it will."

But Hansel only shook his head still the more sadly, repeating, "The germ of life is wasted; its health and vigor gone: no, it can never yield perfect fruit again."

Wilhelm would heed no such discouraging words. He carefully planted the root himself, nursing its sickly growth with unwearied patience and skill; but only a few buds repaid his toil, and they were small and stunted.

Hansel never recovered his robust health, and was no longer able to give much assistance in cultivating the once precious tree. He loved to sit under its shade, and pluck the imperfect dwarf fruit to amuse his brother's children; telling them, the while, how precious the gift was once, and how he had wasted and abused it; and warning them, should they ever possess a golden root, to profit by the lesson he now taught them.

Years rolled by, and the two brothers died; but Wilhelm left to each of his children a little brown seed, which he had gathered from the first tree he planted, and which seemed to him of far greater value than all the broad fields of their rich inheritance. Some of his sons travelled abroad and planted the little brown seed in distant lands, where it spread and flourished. But

there is a tradition which relates, that to the youngest boy, who was his namesake and favorite, Hansel left his golden root, as a keepsake; but the boy dug it up, and carefully removing the corroded parts, planted it again, with his little brown seed; and they grew together until their branches intertwined, forming a great canopy, beneath which the council always met to make the nation's laws.

It says, besides, that the young man became ruler over all the country, and made wonderful discoveries in science, so that he obtained the title of "Hansel the wise, the prudent, and the good;" and what is better, deserved it too, which is more than can be said of many a monarch who has governed before and since.

Aunt Elsie took off her spectacles, and dropped the manuscript into her work-basket.

"Such a very pretty story," cried the smaller children; "and now, Aunt Elsie, please tell us what the golden root and the little brown seed mean."

The old lady shook her head, and smiled.

"I leave all that to your ingenuity to discover," she said.

"The golden root means talent, I think," said Arthur; "and Hansel misapplied it."

"He did worse," added Mabel; "he wickedly wasted and destroyed it, by refusing to give it the needed care."

"Which means study and improvement, does it not, Aunt Elsie?" asked Grace.

"Yes, Grace," she responded; "but much more than this is implied in the proper cultivation of the golden root. He who possesses talent should consider it a precious gift, of which he will be expected to render a strict account; and should endeavor so to use it that while it serves himself and others, it shall also redound to the honor and glory of the great Giver, by whom it was bestowed."

"And when Hansel planted the golden root, he should have let it remain," said Frank: "nothing can grow if constantly uprooted which I suppose means that talent should not be wasted by changing from one occupation to another, without taking time to excel in any."

"Right, Franky; you are growing quite a philosopher," returned Harry. "There are plenty

like Hansel in the world, who blame the ill success of their golden root to every thing rather than their own fickleness or want of proper cultivation."

"But the little brown seed!" cried Kate; "that made Wilhelm and Mr. Helme both so rich; pray tell us what that is."

"It must be persevering industry, that overcomes all difficulties, and is crowned with success at last," said Edith.

"Why, so it is!" cried Robert; "and if industry is all that is needed, I mean to be as rich as Mr. Helme myself yet."

"But something more *is* needed," replied Clara; "for Wilhelm was persevering as well as industrious; and if you wish to succeed as he did, you must never be disheartened by difficulties."

"That is the right principle," cried Harry Wilder;

> 'And of all maxims, the best and the oldest
> Is the stout watchword of never give up!'

If Wilhelm had known any thing about poetry, doubtless he would have written that upon his door-posts."

"Aunt Elsie's story reminds me," said Fred,

"of a fable we used to learn at school, about a hare and a tortoise who ran a race together. The hare ran so swiftly that he soon left the poor tortoise far enough behind; and thinking he could easily win, laid down to take a nap; but while he slept, the tortoise, who all this while was creeping steadily on, came up and passed him, and so won the race after all."

The children laughed at Fred's fable, and little Lilie exclaimed, with a half-sigh—

"How I wish I had a little brown seed to plant, and then it would grow into a great tree for Franky: he so loves to sit under the trees."

"So did Hansel," replied Frank, looking up with a smile; "but he gained nothing by it, Lilie. No, I will plant the brown seed myself, and you shall rest under its shade, and eat of its fruit," he added, kissing her as he spoke.

Aunt Elsie looked affectionately upon them.

"That is a wise resolve," she said; "and all of you, my children, may possess and plant the little brown seed: even those bees can claim it; and see what a wonderful work they accomplish through its agency alone! It is persevering industry that builds their curious cells and stores them with honey; and the same principle made

our kind friend, Mr. Helme, rich and respected as he is. He planted and watered the seed with perseverance and care, and is now enjoying the fruits of his industry."

"Then, hurrah for the little brown seed!" cried Fred; "we don't need the golden root at all: we can do very well without it."

"You are wrong there, Fred," rejoined Aunt Elsie, rising as she spoke. "Talent does not always insure success in life; but those among you to whose share it has fallen will, I trust, so nourish and improve the golden root, that the fruit it bears will be perfect in its kind; and while you despise not the little brown seed, will deserve at last to be called, with the son of Wilhelm, 'wise, prudent, and good.'"

CHAPTER V.

How pleasant it was out in the grand old woods, beneath the shady trees, through whose clustering leaves the hot noonday sun strove in vain to get a peep at the merry group gathered there!

The day of the long anticipated pic-nic had arrived at last, and no farther disappointment awaited little Lilie. The morning sun rose clear and bright, and though his beams fell very warmly upon the earth, yet a soft air gently stirred the leaves, and gathered fragrance from the flowers. It was a lovely summer day, just warm enough to make the refreshing dampness of the woods desirable; and yet the heat was not so intense as to forbid all exertion.

The children were awake and busy very early that morning, making preparations for the day of pleasure; and before the sun was many hours high, were ready with their baskets and sun-bonnets, for a ramble in the woods. Aunt Elsie fol-

lowed at her leisure, to join the little party in their favorite spot, where they had formed a rustic seat for her especial benefit.

This chosen place of resort was a gently rising knoll, where the trees formed a circle, and their long branches intertwined into a leafy roof, while the grass beneath was fresh and green. The boys had fastened a strong swing between two tall trees; and this was a favorite amusement of the little girls, who each in turn enjoyed its exhilarating motion.

When the little party reached this spot, they deposited their baskets carefully beneath the bushes, and then separated to pursue their own pleasures. Several of the elder children carried their drawing-pencils and sketch-books with them, some to finish drawings of favorite trees, and others to seek for beautiful views. Edward and Robert brought their bows and arrows; and a few among the party sought for the varied and beautiful fern to dry and press; gathering also fresh moss to make into baskets. Some of the children lingered behind to enjoy the swing; and Aunt Elsie, as she drew near, heard Marian exclaim,

"It is my turn now, Fred; swing me next: I

want to join Mabel, for she will soon be out of sight."

"But it is *my* turn, cousin, if you please," replied Fred, teasingly, and springing into the swing as he spoke. "You have had one swing already, and I think I deserve some reward for my gallantry in waiting upon you all."

"Gallantry, indeed!" returned Marian, with a crimsoned face: "you are a very ill-bred, unmannerly boy to keep me waiting here when you can just as well take your turn afterwards."

"So can you, cousin mine," cried the tormenting Fred, as he stepped back a few paces, and touching his feet to the ground, sent the swing up with renewed force.

"Just wait until I am a little cooled after my exertions in pushing you all, and then I will swing you as high as you please."

"But I don't please to wait; neither shall you swing me at all: so jump out at once, Master Fred, and give me the seat," rejoined the little girl angrily, and trying to catch the rope in her hand as it passed.

But Fred only laughed at his cousin, and sent the swing up higher among the trees a few times more.

"Now," he cried, "I am somewhat cooler and more comfortable: just let the cat die, Marian, and then you shall have a fine swing."

Marian walked poutingly apart, twirling her sun-bonnet by its string, and repeating,

"No, I will not swing at all now."

"Just as you please," retorted Fred, laughing. "You don't want to swing, and I see have no need of your bonnet; so lend it to me, I am afraid of my complexion;" and snatching the bonnet from her hand as he spoke, he put it on his head and ran off.

It was evident that Fred was in a very teasing mood, and Marian in quite a bad humor; she followed her cousin, calling in no very gentle voice, while he looked laughingly back. Down the slope they rushed, and as Fred rapidly made his way through brake and brier, an officious little bramble jerked the bonnet from his head, and flung it into a muddy pool, that the late rains had made.

Here was a catastrophe! Fred's laughter was checked, and he looked really sorry, as he hastened to pick up the dripping sun-bonnet, and wring out the water. Marian was perfectly speechless with vexation, to see her neat white

bonnet, which Dinah had so carefully ironed, and the ruffle of which Aunt Elsie herself had crimped, now wet, crumpled, and stained with mud: it was the drop too much in her cup of ill-humor, and she sat down and cried with anger and annoyance.

"I am very sorry, Marian," said Fred, who was now thoroughly cured of his teasing mood. "I am sure I did not mean to hurt the bonnet; I only wanted to give you a race, and tease you a little."

"But you are forever teasing me," returned Marian, finding voice at last through her sobs; "and I don't like you at all: what will Aunt Elsie say when she sees my nice bonnet in such a condition? I mean to tell her all about it, and she will scold you I know; for you deserve it."

"Well, perhaps I do," answered her cousin with good-natured contrition: "at any rate it was certainly not your fault that the bonnet got dirtied; but dry up your tears, Marian, and forgive me this time: I will promise not to tease you any more, unless you are in a good-humor."

"I *was* in a good-humor," retorted Marian, hastily, "until you spoiled it by your ugly ways:

now what am I to do without a bonnet? I shall be all freckled and burned in the sun."

"No, no," cried Fred, coaxingly; "I don't want to see my cousin's pretty face any more disfigured than it is: here, take my hat and tie it down with my handkerchief—so: it makes a capital gipsey bonnet, and is really very becoming."

He took off his broad straw hat as he spoke, and put it on Marian's head, while she sat passive and sullen; then, passing his handkerchief over the crown, tied it beneath her chin, and very pretty and picturesque it looked; and had the face beneath it been smiling and pleasant, it would have been most becoming besides.

"And now," continued the boy, pleasantly, "I will run up to the house, and ask Dinah if she will please wash and iron the bonnet, and then I will go for it when it is done: it won't take very long to dry. So now, you see, I am very sorry, and willing to do all I can to mend the mischief: let us kiss and be friends, coz." He looked smilingly in her face as he spoke, but Marian had not yet recovered her good-humor, and turned sulkily away.

"Very well," cried Fred; "perhaps you will

when I come back: the clean bonnet must buy my pardon."

So saying, he ran rapidly towards the house with the muddied sun-bonnet in his hand.

From the little knoll above, Aunt Elsie had been an unobserved spectator of this scene, and had heard Fred's good-natured apologies, and his cousin's angry replies. She waited until the boy was out of sight, and then returned herself, by another path, to the house.

Fred had arrived some time before, and had easily persuaded the good-natured Dinah, with whom his liveliness made him an especial favorite, to wash out the soiled bonnet immediately. It was already washed and spread out in the sun to dry when Aunt Elsie reached home; and the kind old lady, after going into the shaded parlor, and opening the old book-case, took down the portfolio, and after a long search, selected several papers which she carefully folded and deposited in her work-bag. She then went into the kitchen, and ironed the bonnet herself, carefully crimping the ruffles, and making all neat as before; after which she proceeded leisurely to the grove.

The morning sped rapidly away, and one after another the children gathered about Aunt Elsie,

who preferred to remain seated in the shade, while they rambled about. Some exhibited the sketches they had made, or the plants they had gathered; while others returned early from their rambles, and sat down with work or drawings, the dear Aunt Elsie chatting pleasantly the while. But it was long past noon before they all assembled, and began to think about dinner.

Then the baskets were brought forth, and a fresh white table-cloth spread upon the smooth bank: while sundry other necessary articles were produced, which the little girls busied themselves in arranging, while the boys were dispatched to the house for the provisions.

They returned with a couple of small hampers, and soon a tempting repast was set forth. Dinah had not forgotten the pot-cheese, to the infinite satisfaction of Fred, who was now in high good-humor. Marian, too, had recovered her smiles, as her cousin slyly produced the clean sun-bonnet from the top of one of the hampers: and the whole party seemed inspired with the spirit of good-natured mirth and innocent enjoyment.

Aunt Elsie's health was drank in bumpers of iced lemonade. Fred touched his glass with Marian's, and gave as a sentiment, "Forgive and

forget;" and several bright speeches were made by the boys, to the no small delight of Dinah, who had followed with several forgotten items, and who evidently enjoyed the scene with the rest.

After the meal was ended, and the fragments nicely cleared away, the children again betook themselves to their several employments; while Arthur produced a new book, and read aloud.

"Well!" exclaimed Kate, after Arthur had closed his book, and the comments of each had been made, "well, this has been a most delightful day: we have nothing left to wish for."

"Except one thing," added Robert, with a side glance towards Aunt Elsie.

"What can that be?" asked Clara. "I am sure we should all be satisfied. I think I never passed a more happy day."

"Nor I," added Mabel; "but I think I know what Robert's one thing needful is."

"And so do I," added little Lilie. "I remember very well; but Aunt Elsie has forgotten all about it."

"What is it, my dears, that Aunt Elsie has forgotten?" asked the kind old lady, with a smile, as she caught Lilie's words.

"A certain promise made some time since," replied Harry Wilder, "which we all remember, and would be delighted to have fulfilled, if it please you, Aunt Elsie."

"Oh, it is the story, the fairy story, which you promised to read when we passed the day in the woods! "Dear Aunt Elsie, will you read it now?" cried Kate, eagerly.

"Yes, the woods are just the place for fairies," added Frank; "but Aunt Elsie has not the old portfolio here."

"I will go for it," cried Arthur and several of the others, starting quickly up.

"Thank you, my dear boys," said the kind Aunt Elsie, smiling as she saw their eager willingness; "but some of the fairies have left the old portfolio, and are safely stowed away in my work-bag, awaiting your pleasure to be freed. You see I have a better memory than you think for, Lilie," she added, producing the manuscript as she spoke.

"How kind and thoughtful!" exclaimed the children, as they eagerly seated themselves at the good old lady's feet; while Kate and little Lilie scrambled up behind her, and kissed her fondly on either cheek.

"I believe you are a fairy yourself," whispered little Lilie; "for you always know just what we want, and have it ready for us."

Aunt Elsie looked up with an answering smile. "But fairies never grow old and wrinkled, you know," she said.

A right pleasant picture it was, with the rich beams of the setting sun streaming amid the leaves, and lighting up the benevolent and still handsome countenance of the dear Aunt Elsie, and lending an added radiance to the group of fresh and happy faces that clustered about her with loving looks as she read to them the story of

The White Violet.

It is so joyous in the glad spring-time, when the little children go forth in merry groups into the fields and woods and gather their laps full of daisies and wild-violets to twine in the curls of their fair hair. The birds seem so plenty then, for the foliage is not yet thick enough to hide them; and they fly from branch to branch, and swing on the slender twigs, calling to each other, that the cold winter is past, and the summer will

soon be here. Then the air is so soft and refreshing, because the hot summer sun has not yet dried the moisture from the ground, and baked the earth into a hard clay; and the little rivulets gurgle over the stones so quickly, as though they feared old winter was coming again to bind them fast in his icy chains. Yes, it is so very joyous in the early spring!

And so all things seemed rejoicing one lovely day in a spring-time long ago. There was sunshine and gladness everywhere, save on the brow and in the heart of little Fienna, for there alone were clouds and sorrow. She walked slowly out into the fresh fields and the shaded woods, with her eyes bent upon the ground, heeding not the freshness and beauty that surrounded her, and at last flinging herself upon the green turf, wept loudly and long. It was pitiful to see the little girl's grief when all around was gay.

But Fienna often came out into the woods to weep, for indeed she was very unhappy. Her father and mother were dead, and she lived with a stern old woman, who had one child of her own, and consequently considered the little orphan a great burden. Fienna was pretty and fair, with soft blue eyes, and pale golden tresses,

that curled without being tortured against their will, and hung in shining ringlets over her shoulders; but her cheeks were not firm and rosy like those of happier children, and her eyelids were often red and swollen with tears; so that the neighbor's children called her a fright. The woman with whom Fienna lived had known the little girl's mother well, and received many kindnesses from her. She had promised her, when she was dying, to take care of the poor little motherless Fienna, and treat her as her own child. But though she took the little girl home, and bade her be happy, as she had got another mother, yet the child found a very great difference between the true and the adopted parent.

This woman had one only son, who was his mother's darling, and a spoiled, ill-natured boy besides. He delighted in teasing Fienna, and playing all manner of tricks upon her, frequently causing her a scolding when she did not deserve it; and if any thing happened amiss, or he did any mischief, he always blamed the little girl, whose denials were never believed, and who consequently often bore the punishment which he deserved. Fienna hated Fritz with all her heart; and though she had ever been a good-tempered

and pleasant child, she was fast becoming sulky and ill-humored, by his constant oppression; and then his mother would say,

"Why, Fienna, I once thought you a good child; but you have grown so very wicked, I must punish you again."

And then the little girl had another task given her, and was forced to stay within while all the other children went out to the woods; and Fritz flung pebbles in upon her from the open window.

No wonder Fienna threw herself upon the bank and cried when she thought of all these things. Fritz had been unusually wicked that day, and had cut off one of her long curls in his ill-mannered, teasing mood. So when the little girl received permission at last to go out into the woods, she sought a lonely spot, and there gave full vent to her anger and tears.

"Oh, how I hate that Fritz!" she cried. "I wish some one would treat him just as he does me, and then he would be punished besides, just as I am: he is too detestable to live, and his mother is a wicked woman to believe all he says. Oh, how I wish I could lie in the ground by my own dear mother, now there is no one to love

me!" And she buried her face in the grass in a paroxysm of bitter feeling.

Just then a low voice seemed to breathe over the little girl.

"There is one who loves you even yet."

Fienna started up, and looked about her. "It was only the sighing of the wind among the trees," she said: "there is no one to love me, now that my dear mother is gone."

But again the soft voice floated over her—

"There is one who loves you well, and will serve you besides."

"Who are you?" exclaimed the little girl, in a frightened tone. "I can see no one: where are you?"

"I am here at your side," replied the invisible speaker; "but you cannot see me because you have wicked and revengeful thoughts in your heart. Those who look upon me must be sinless and pure, and have no evil feelings, neither wish any ill to others."

"But how can I help having wicked thoughts and wishing bad things to happen to that hateful Fritz, who does nothing but abuse me from morning till night?" replied Fienna, whose mind again reverted to her troubles.

"True, Fritz is very unkind sometimes; but by indulging in these wicked thoughts you will learn to be like him at last; while by being gentle and kind, you may make even him love you," returned the voice.

"I don't want Fritz to love me: he is a bad boy, and I cannot bear him," said the little girl, sulkily.

"Fienna," spoke the voice once more, and now its tones seemed sad and reproachful, "I must leave you forever if you persist in these sinful feelings, and then you can never be happy. Listen, little girl. Does not the bright sun shine on all alike? When the earth is hard and frozen, and no flowers can be seen, he still smiles kindly down, till even the ice thaws beneath his influence, and the flowers bloom again. So kindness and gentle words will in time soften the hardest heart; but revenge and anger, like the bleak north wind, only freezes the ice still harder. If there were no sun, there would be no flowers. Which will you be, Fienna, the sun or the wind? will you be loved or hated?"

Fienna heard these words in silence: gentler feelings crept over her.

"I will be loved," she murmured; "only

teach me how, for there is no one who cares for me now."

"Listen, then," returned the voice. "You must send all these revengeful thoughts and wishes far from you; they are making you sinful and selfish. You must try to do unto others as you would have them do to you; and remembering this, when Fritz acts unkindly, bear with him, and let not an angry retort provoke him to greater evil. Instead of growing sulky and discontented in thinking over your ill-treatment, try to deserve better, by constant willingness to perform all the duties required of you. And above and beyond all, cherish no malice for the harm done you, but from your heart forgive it. Will you do this, Fienna?"

The voice was inexpressibly sweet and persuasive. It sunk into the heart of the little girl, and the feelings of hatred and ill-will melted before it like frost beneath the warm sunbeams.

"I will try," she said, softly; "but I am afraid I cannot do all this, when Fritz so constantly provokes me; yet I will try with all my might."

"Do so, my little girl, and you will conquer at last," returned the sweet voice, with an encouraging tone; "but I will not leave you unassisted

in your good endeavors. You cannot behold me yet, Fienna; but just where my foot has pressed the turf, there will spring up a tuft of white violets: carry them with you, and plant them in a far-off corner of the garden where they can remain. Pluck one each day and hide it in your bosom: it will exhale a sweet fragrance when you bear unkindness meekly, which will fill the hearts of those about you with kinder and more gentle thoughts, and so in time win all to love you; and you will then be happy, because all good and unselfish feelings will fill your heart, and drive the evil ones away forever."

As these words floated softly upon the air, the little girl felt a slight pressure upon her brow, like the wing of a bird as it brushes the dew from the leaves; and then a calm feeling of repose stole into her breast as she arose from the bank.

She waited a little while for the sweet voice to speak again; but now all was still, save the soft rustling of the young spring leaves, and the twittering good-night of the birds as they sought their nests, for the sun was fast sinking behind the hills, and the forest shades deepened in the twilight.

Then Fienna knew that the gentle voice was

gone; and looking down upon the turf at her side, she saw a tuft of sweet white violets, which certainly were not there when she first threw herself upon the bank.

The little girl looked upon the spotless white flowers with a feeling of awe, for she remembered the words of the spirit-voice, and knew it was here that the foot of her unseen friend had pressed. She feared to stoop and touch them, and stood awhile in wrapt amazement. But presently she started, for now the evening was coming on, and she knew that a severe reproof awaited her for lingering so long in the woods. Then she thought of the promise the spirit-voice had made to assist her in bearing unkindness, and of the wonderful fragrance the violets would shed around.

"I will take them with me now," she thought. "I shall need all their sweet influence to help me in keeping my resolution; for I know I shall be scolded for staying out so long, and perhaps be sent to bed supperless besides."

She bent over the violets, and their rich fragrance came up refreshingly, as she carefully loosened the earth about them, and carried them home.

Sure enough, the first words that greeted Fien-

na upon her return, were harsh and upbraiding: and she was told to go to bed at once, as she deserved no supper. True to her resolution, the little girl complied at once without a murmur, and even the gibes and mocking words of Fritz, who met her at the door, aroused no angry look or word in reply. Her heart was full of the fragrance of the violets which she concealed in her apron, and she was meditating how to obtain a chance of planting them unseen.

By and by she heard the garden gate close, and looking out from her little window, saw Fritz and his mother going down the road. Then she quietly stole down stairs, and out into the garden, where, far away in one corner, overgrown with nettles, she carefully made a place for her tuft of violets, and watered them plentifully, trusting that in this secluded and uninviting spot, they would escape all notice.

The pale new moon arose, and peeped over the little girl's shoulder as she pursued her task: and as its soft ray fell upon the white violets, their purity became dazzling to look upon; and they sent up a gush of sweet odor, that filled Fienna's heart with a strange sense of peace and goodwill.

Fienna arose very early the next morning, and hurried into the garden, to see if her precious violets were safe. There they were, seemingly buried amid the nettles, but turning their spotless faces to the sun, as if they enjoyed his glowing beam. The little girl dared not linger long; so hastily plucking a flower, she hid it in her bosom, and returned to the house.

She then swept up the door-yard, and fed the noisy poultry who were already abroad, and softly returned to her own little garret to arrange her hair tidily, which she had not before waited to do.

Just as she had finished, she heard the harsh voice of her adopted mother calling on the stairs:

"Come, get up, lazy one. I warrant you would sleep till noon. Be down quickly or you will have no breakfast; and you must need it after losing your supper, by your wilful ways."

Fienna made no reply to this, but followed so quickly after the woman, that she turned about in surprise: and when she found the poultry fed, and door-yard swept, instead of giving a word of praise, she angrily inquired what had made her rise so early.

"She wanted a biscuit from the larder, I guess,"

answered Fritz, grinning, as he now stood near his mother, with uncombed hair, and his shoes in his hand: "she would not get up so early for nothing."

Fienna felt her color rise at this speech, but she controlled herself, and said,

"I rose early to come into the garden, and as the poultry were about, I thought I had better feed them."

"Thou didst right for once, Fienna," replied the woman in a mollified tone, for she had sought the larder, and found her biscuits safe: besides, the fragrance of the white violet stole into her heart, as the little girl spoke. "And thou, Fritz, had better go and tidy thyself, or no breakfast shalt thou get in that plight."

Fritz cast an ugly scowl upon Fienna, as he slowly obeyed; but the little girl's heart was lightened by those trifling words of kindness, and she performed all her duties so willingly, that she received an extra supply of bread and milk for her breakfast.

Fritz looked upon this unwonted kindness of his mother with an angry brow, and determined to procure the little girl a punishment in some way. All day long he contrived in various ways to

annoy her, spilling water upon the clean floor, and slyly removing the pins from the newly washed clothes, so that they should fall in the dirt.

Fienna's patience was severely tried; but the breath of the violet seemed to sustain her; so she wiped up the wet, and rinsed the muddied clothes without a complaint. Fritz saw this unusual conduct with surprise: he had expected the little girl to retort angrily upon him as usual, and then he could easily inflame her anger by taunts and jeers, until his mother interfered, when by telling falsehoods, the blame and punishment were all awarded to Fienna.

But this day he was disappointed: yet he resolved that the morning's extra supply of bread and milk should be atoned for by the little girl going supperless again, while he enjoyed her portion.

It seemed strange that Fritz should find so much delight in annoying the poor little girl, and making her unhappy: but he was a cruel, evil-minded boy, like many another, who liked to have something about him on which to vent his wickedness; and Fienna, helpless and unprotected, was a fit victim: there was no one to take her part, and

her violent and unavailing expressions of anger and hate amused and delighted him. It certainly seemed a hopeless task to overcome so wicked a heart, by kind and gentle means.

When Fienna sat down to her work in the afternoon, he hid her pincushion, and dropped the thread in water: thus delaying her, so that her task could not be accomplished in time to take a stroll in the woods. But the little girl, instead of helplessly crying over her annoyances, dried the thread, and found the pincushion; but despite all her diligence, she could not finish her task much before supper, and only found an opportunity to water her precious violets before bedtime.

After she was in bed, she thought over all that had happened during the day: and although the fragrance of the violet had not softened Fritz's heart, or inspired him with any feeling of kindness, still it had kept her own rebellious feelings in check: she had not given way to any sinful thoughts, and felt much happier as she laid her head upon her pillow, than ever she had been before.

The next morning found her again up with the sun, and with the freshly culled violet in her bosom, she again endured the wicked pranks of

the tormenting Fritz. His mother was evidently pleased with the unusual change in the little girl, and this only enraged him the more.

It chanced that day Fienna was sent up stairs for his mother's best shawl, as she was going to visit a neighbor; and the wicked boy contrived to slip the inkstand from the closet and place it just beneath the shawl, which was on a high shelf above. In her endeavor to reach it, the little girl upset the stand, and down poured the black ink over the shawl and herself! Poor Fienna stood a moment in perfect terror, at this unexpected mishap. Presently she beheld the malicious face of Fritz peeping at her from behind the door.

"Mother, mother!" he screamed exultingly; "Fienna has ruined your new shawl: come and see!"

His mother came hastily up stairs, and there was the little girl endeavoring to rub the ink-spots from the shawl with her apron, which was in a sad condition also. Without waiting to inquire into the cause of the accident, she gave the unfortunate child a severe box on the ears, pouring forth at the same time all the vilest names she could command, while the wicked au-

thor of all the mischief stood grinning with malicious pleasure at the scene.

Fienna knew that all explanations would be useless; and she really felt so sorry to see the stains upon the new shawl, that her own trouble was forgotten. Perhaps it was the magical fragrance of the violet that led her to assist eagerly in remedying the mischief, despite the abuse that still showered upon her; and though her heart swelled when she saw the wicked joy of Fritz, she passed him without an angry look.

The poor little girl lost both dinner and supper that day, and had extra work given her besides; while Fritz was left at home to torment her when his mother went out.

Fienna sewed steadily away, though the tears rolled down her cheeks, and said not a word in reply to the mockery and sneers of the wicked boy, who was whittling a stick upon the window-seat. Presently he dropped his knife and screamed out with pain, holding one hand in the other, while the blood slowly trickled through his fingers from a great gash across his palm.

Had this happened a few days before, Fienna would have exulted and told him it served him right, and she was glad of it, without offering to

help him; but now the fragrance of the white violet filled her heart; and so raising her eyes from her work, she said, kindly,

"Are you hurt, Fritz? I am sorry."

"That you are not," retorted the boy, distrustfully. "I know very well you are glad I have cut myself."

Little Fienna made no reply to this rude speech; but getting a piece of soft linen, came up to him and said,

"Let me bind it up for you, Fritz. I will be very careful not to hurt you."

Fritz looked up in some surprise, but ungraciously held out his hand, which the little girl tenderly washed and tied up. He did not thank her when she had finished, but sat idly drumming his feet against the wall, while she returned to her work. After a while he said,

"I am sorry the ink got spilled on mother's new shawl."

"So am I," replied Fienna, sighing heavily.

"Was it your fault?" asked the boy, abruptly.

"You know best, Fritz," returned the little girl, gently, and lifting her eyes as she spoke.

The boy was silent a few moments longer.

"I wish mother would give you your supper to-night," he said at last.

"Never mind, Fritz; I can do very well without it," she answered, while a feeling of surprise and pleasure at this unwonted kindness brought tears to her eyes.

She did not know, and neither did the boy himself, that the sweet fragrance of the violet had stolen into his breast while the little girl bent over him to tie up the wounded hand.

This kindly mood did not long continue; for his mother's increasing kindness to the little girl awakened all the malicious envy of his evil nature, and he only hated her the more: the magic of the violet seemed lost on him. But his mother, who though harsh and stern, was not hard-hearted, felt softened by the gentle forbearance and willingness of the little girl. The breath of the violet was insensibly filling her heart with its strange sweet odor. She condemned less hastily than before, and sometimes even corrected Fritz for his ill-natured tricks.

This change made Fienna much happier, though she still had a great deal to bear from her tormentor; but she never rejoiced when he was reproved, and always spoke kindly and patiently

to him, while she nourished the precious violets with the greatest care.

Fritz, who had watched her going frequently to one corner of the garden, sought out one day the little tuft of violets; and delighted at being able to annoy her at last, he trampled them beneath his feet, and crushed the spotless flowers to the ground.

When Fienna went as usual to gather a violet on the following morning, she beheld them bruised and withered.

"That wicked Fritz has been here and done this!" she exclaimed; and then angry and revengeful words rose to her lips: but as she bent sorrowfully over the crushed violets, they sent forth a gush of fragrance, and her anger melted away in tears.

"My violets, my precious violets!" she cried. "Now you are withered, I shall never be able to keep my temper, and so never be loved after all."

"Why, what are all these tears about?" asked a voice near her; and looking up with a start, Fienna saw Fritz and his mother.

"This is what brings you out into the garden so early, is it?" she said, while the breath of the charmed flowers insensibly crept into her heart

"Well, I see no use of hiding your violets here, as though it were a sin to look at them; neither should you have trampled upon them, Fritz: but dry up your tears, silly child; they will grow again, and thou shalt plant them in a sunny corner—not here among these nettles. It is a foolish fancy, but not hurtful; so dig them up, and plant them in a spot where they will flourish."

Overjoyed at these unexpected words of kindness, Fienna soon complied, and the tuft of violets was replanted in a pleasant spot of the garden, while Fritz was forbidden to touch them upon pain of punishment.

Fritz had looked sorry when he saw Fienna's grief, and even brought water for her to water the bruised flowers; but when his mother thus openly took her part, and blamed him, his evil nature was aroused again, and he walked sullenly away, intent upon some plan of venting his angry malice.

Meanwhile, Fienna gathered several of the crushed violets that were broken from their stems, and hid them in her bosom, where they exhaled even a sweeter odor from being bruised.

That day was one of comparative comfort to

the little girl; for Fritz kept out of the way, and the sweet flowers which she carried in her bosom filled her heart with their charmed influence, while even the mother of Fritz felt their spell.

The wicked Fritz meanwhile had busied himself in tying a strong twine across the path that led to the spot where Fienna had planted her violets; so that when she went after sunset to water her flowers, she might trip, and be thrown down on the rough gravelled walk. But it so chanced that the little girl had permission to go out into the woods that afternoon, and she lingered so long, thinking over the strange adventure with her unseen friend, and hoping again to hear the sweet spirit voice, that evening had closed in, and the pale stars were seating themselves, one by one, on their thrones in the far-off sky, when she bent her steps homeward.

She did not fear a scolding now, because she had received permission to linger in the woods as long as she chose, as a reward for her diligence and gentleness during the day.

As she entered the garden gate, she heard a voice moaning sadly, and though a little frightened, cried out,

"Who is there?"

"It is I," answered the voice of Fritz; "I have hurt my leg, and cannot stir."

Fienna ran rapidly up the path from whence the voice came: it was nearly dark, and the shadows of the trees and shrubs lay heavily upon the ground.

"Where are you, Fritz?" she exclaimed, but just then she saw the boy lying just before her.

"How came you here, and what is the matter? can't you get up?" she asked, anxiously.

"I tell you I can't move," replied the boy, impatiently, while he writhed in pain: "I believe I have broken my leg."

Fienna was now very much frightened: she ran to the house, calling loudly for his mother, and then went to a neighbor's to beg assistance in lifting Fritz.

The boy was soon surrounded by a group of neighbors, two of whom lifted him carefully, and carried him to the house, where he was laid upon the bed: he screamed out whenever they moved or touched him, and seemed in great pain.

When the physician came, he said the boy's ankle was broken, and he would perhaps be a cripple all his life. All the long night Fienna and his mother kept watch by his bedside, for he

could not sleep for pain, and his moans were distressing to hear.

With the first dawn of daylight, little Fienna went softly out into the garden; she felt exhausted and feverish from want of sleep, and the fresh morning air revived her: then she remembered that she had neglected to water her precious violets the evening before, in her alarm about Fritz, and hastening towards the spot where they grew, she saw the string lying across the path; it was just here that Fritz had fallen, and as she stooped to untie the now broken twine, she could not help the conviction that the boy had set this snare for her, and had strangely enough fallen into it himself. And thus it had happened: for Fritz, running down the path to join a companion, entirely forgot the string, and caught his foot in it, twisting his ankle beneath him as he fell: and so the evil he had prepared for another, returned upon himself.

Fienna was delighted to see her violets quite refreshed, and holding up their heads bravely once more. There were very few flowers left, however, but the buds were plenty: the little girl gathered one fragrant flower, and returned thoughtfully to the house.

For many weeks Fritz was forced to lie in his bed unable to move; and all this time little Fienna was his kind and attentive nurse. The tuft of violets was thriving wonderfully in the sunny spot where she had planted it; and each day a freshly gathered group was placed on a little stand by the bedside of the suffering boy. Their sweet fragrance filled the chamber, and insensibly crept into the heart of Fritz, who had full time now to reflect upon his past conduct.

As he witnessed the untiring and patient kindness of Fienna, and saw how cheerfully, and even tenderly she sought to soothe his anguish, and minister to his comfort, a keen feeling of self-reproach and sorrow for all his wickedness to her came over him; he could not but acknowledge how just it was that he should fall into the snare which he had set for her, and often wondered if Fienna knew what had caused his fall.

Meanwhile the breath of the charmed violets gently fanned these contrite feelings into greater strength, and beneath their sweet and holy influence, he became gentle, patient, and grateful.

His mother saw the change with wonder, while Fienna blessed the precious violets which

she felt sure had worked this change, and treasured them with redoubled care.

As Fritz began slowly to recover, he was sitting one day propped up with pillows by the open window: the soft summer air came soothingly over his brow; a little vase of the sweet white violets stood upon the window-seat, and mingled their rich fragrance with the summer breeze. He could see the very spot where he fell, and the tuft of white violets gleamed like snow-flakes among the green leaves.

Then as the flowers by his side sent their magical perfume into his heart, a change came over his spirit. The evil feelings of envy and malice fled away, and in their stead came repentance and contrition. He turned with tearful eyes to his mother and Fienna, and, in a subdued and humble voice, told how he had fastened the string to trip the little girl, and had afterwards fallen over it himself; and then he asked Fienna to forgive him, and promised never to tease her any more.

His mother was surprised and indignant at his recital, and began to reproach him severely; but little Fienna looked up in her face with a pleading smile, and said,

"Do not reproach Fritz, because he is sorry, and will never play such tricks again. I found the string the next morning, but I forgave him long ago. And now we will be good friends always, won't we, Fritz?" she added, turning her beaming face towards the boy.

The mother could not resist her gentle pleading. She kissed her son, and begged him to keep his good resolves. Then it was strange, yet delightful, to find what a delicious perfume filled the little chamber, and how the fragrance came wafted even from the tuft of violets away in the garden, and sunk into the hearts of those who were now united in feelings of love and kindness towards each other.

After a time Fritz grew strong, and was able to leave his room. Then it was pleasant to see how tenderly Fienna supported his feeble steps as he slowly limped along with his crutch, and how gratefully he received her kindness. Fritz never recovered the use of his ankle, but remained a cripple all his life. He loved to assist Fienna in cultivating her violets, and most wondrously they thrived beneath the united care of both.

The little tuft spread until it covered a large

plot of ground, and the white violets became the admiration of all around; while their rich fragrance floated on the air, and made the atmosphere of Fienna's home.

As time passed on, Fienna delighted in gathering the little children about her, and scattering the sweet white flowers among them, with the inward hope that the rich blessing of their charmed fragrance should shed its holy influence over the hearts of all.

One lovely summer night the young girl went to water her precious bed of violets, and Fritz brought the water from a spring near by. The pale moon shone clear in the blue sky, and poured a flood of silver light full upon the spotless flowers. As Fienna bent lovingly over them, a soft voice seemed to mingle with their delicious fragrance, and these words were borne on the violet's breath,

"Are you happy now, Fienna?"

"Oh, yes; so very happy!" cried the young girl, in a delighted tone; "and to your lovely violets I owe it all, sweet spirit."

"Treasure them, then, with all your care, and through the rough blasts of winter they shall not

perish; neither shall their charmed fragrance ever fade from your heart."

As these words died on her ear like the sighing away of a breeze, Fienna was sure that she saw, hovering above the bed of violets, the faint outline of a fairy figure, whose thin robes shone like a silver mist in the pale moonlight; her fair hair was wreathed with white violets, and her soft eyes beamed kindly upon the young girl. But even as Fienna gazed upon the lovely vision, it faded from her sight; and turning to Fritz, who had just placed the bucket of water at her side, she eagerly asked if he had seen the flower-spirit, or heard her words.

Fritz shook his head, and smiled.

"Nay, Fienna, it was but the rustling of the leaves," he said, "and the shimmering of the moonlight among the trees."

Fienna said no more, but she felt a glow of gratitude that the white violets had so far purified her heart, that she might behold, even faintly, the pure flower-spirit who had turned her sorrow into gladness, and her heaviness to joy.

"It was the spirit of forgiveness!" said Mabel Sutherland, as Aunt Elsie finished the story.

"And the sweet fragrance of the violets was forbearance," added Grace; "for that alone could have made Fienna bear with the wicked pranks of Fritz, and win him to do right after all."

Meanwhile Marian arose, and coming up to Fred, put out her hand, saying, with a slight blush and a pleasant smile,

"I will kiss and be friends now, Fred. Aunt Elsie's sweet story has been like the breath of the violets to me. I am ashamed of my ill-temper this morning, and will try to be more good-natured and forgiving hereafter; for indeed you deserve it."

"Good!" exclaimed her cousin, as he gracefully accepted the proffered salute. "It is never too late to do well; and for my part I had no right to tease you so; though I won't promise never to do so again, since this is the way to make friends," he added, with an arch smile.

"Why, what is all this about?" cried Harry Wilder, who did not understand the scene: "have Marian and you been quarrelling, Fred?"

"Not exactly," returned Fred, smiling, "merely a cousinly difference, which I shrewdly suspect Aunt Elsie has overheard."

"No, no, interrupted little Lilie. "I told you Aunt Elsie was a fairy, and now I am sure of it; she always knows just what we want, and her stories suit us exactly, whether she knows what we have been doing or not."

"I cannot claim any fairy-like pretensions in this instance, however, Lilie," replied Aunt Elsie, with a smile; "because I did chance to be an observer of a scene this morning between two of my little people, which I could not altogether approve: they were both to blame; and as they have acknowledged it, the white violet has not breathed its kindly teachings in vain."

"But I was the most to blame," returned Marian; "because though Fred did tease me, it was all in fun; and when he offered to mend the mischief so cheerfully, I should have forgiven him at once."

"And I should not have persisted in what I saw was annoying to you," said Fred; "for no one can be always in the humor for sport."

"I am glad to see you both so ready to acknowledge your fault," said the dear Aunt Elsie,

with an approving smile; "and if you remember hereafter to do unto others as you would they should do to you, you will have less reason for self-reproach."

"Well," cried Kate, "I wish that charmed violets grew now-a-days; for I defy any one to keep their temper with such a torment as that Fritz must have been, unless they constantly carried the white violet in their bosom."

"That is what Aunt Elsie's pretty story teaches us, Kate," returned Clara: "we must bear and forbear, forgive and forget."

"You remember," added Edith, gently, "where we are taught to do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who despitefully use and persecute us: it is the lesson of returning good for evil that Aunt Elsie's story teaches, I think."

"Yes," continued Arthur, "and of patient forbearance besides; 'a soft answer turneth aside wrath;' and little Fienna's gentle endurance conquered even Fritz at last, when all her anger and hate had failed."

"That reminds me of the fable about the sun and the wind, who laid a wager which could the soonest cause a traveller to lay aside his cloak," said Harry Wilder. "The wind puffed and blew,

but the traveller only folded his cloak closer about him and went on. Then the sun sent his pleasant warm beams full upon him, and the traveller was glad to take off his cloak, and so trudged on merrily without it, while the sun won the wager."

"So after this let us all resolve to be sunbeams," cried Ellen.

"We will, we will!" cried many voices.

"In that case," said Aunt Elsie, with a smile, and rising as she spoke, "I am happy in being able to carry so many sunbeams home with me; for see, the sun himself has folded his purple robe about him and left the sky; and it is time to return, as the dews are beginning to fall."

The little party then gathered their various articles of employment together, and left the woods, chatting pleasantly as they went of the story of the white violets, and the happy day they had passed.

CHAPTER VI.

"Look, look!" cried Robert Sutherland, as the little party were gathered upon the piazza one afternoon; "what a beautiful pair of ponies before that little carriage! See how gracefully they hold up their heads as they dash along the road. It is a real stylish turn-out. I wonder whose it can be."

"Oh, that belongs to our neighbor, Mr. Morse, who lives in the large stone house that looks like a castle up there on the hill," replied Edith, who with the rest of the group had been attracted by Robert's exclamation.

"Or rather to his only son, who is now home from college a while, I believe," added Arthur; "and already makes quite a sensation with his spirited horses."

"More than he ever will with his books, I am thinking," continued Harry; "for he is too fond of pleasure to be much of a student, though a young lad of fine talents."

"See!" exclaimed little Lilie, "the ponies are coming down the road again, and now they are stopping at our gate."

"Yes, and there is young Morse himself: he has jumped out, and is doubtless coming to pay his respects to Aunt Elsie," said Arthur.

As he spoke, a tall young stripling sprang from the carriage, and throwing the reins to his groom, rapidly passed up the gravel walk, and joined the group upon the piazza. He was welcomed by Aunt Elsie and those of the party with whom he was acquainted, and after a general introduction to the rest, a lively conversation ensued, in which their visitor certainly took the lead, with an air of easy self-possession.

Robert meanwhile slipped off unobserved into the road, and was so intent asking the groom questions, and admiring the elegant equipage and spirited ponies, that he did not observe the approach of their owner until he heard him say, in a good-natured tone,

"Fond of ponies, are you, my little fellow? Step in and I will give you a turn."

Robert did not wait a second bidding, but sprang into the carriage with a delighted face; and the young owner, taking the reins, desired

his groom, in an authoritative manner, to await his return, and then touching the ponies with the lash, they dashed off in fine style.

In about half an hour they returned, and Robert was left at the gate. He joined his companions with rapturous expressions about the delightful drive he had taken.

"You were more fortunate than the rest of us, Robert," said Fred, "for we only received a general invitation to pay a visit, while you have already come in for a substantial favor."

"Yes, we had a grand drive," returned Robert. "Young Morse made the ponies go famously. I wish he had let me drive; but I did not like to ask him."

"He would scarcely trust such a little fellow as you are," replied his sister Mabel.

"Why, he is but four years older himself," said her brother; "and he says he always drives. Oh, what a fine thing it is to be rich; one can then have every thing he wants!"

"Not always," returned Edith; "for Mr. Morse himself, the father of your new friend, is a confirmed invalid, and unable to enjoy any of the luxuries about him. So you see that health and wealth do not always go hand in hand at least."

"No," answered the boy, positively; "but poor people are as often ill as the rich; and then I am sure they are worse off. When I grow a man I am determined to become rich, for no one can be happy without money."

No one replied to this speech, as the little party now set out for a stroll; and though their way led through beautiful paths, and the sky was rich with a gorgeous sunset, Robert had no eyes or thoughts for any thing else than the enviable owner of the dashing ponies; and he was constantly ejaculating wishes and comparisons between their fortunate possessor and himself.

"If I was only in young Morse's place!" he cried. "If those ponies were only mine, wouldn't I dash along the road and make the dust fly!"

"I don't think the dust would be a very desirable accompaniment on such a day as this," said Fred, dryly.

"I am sure," added Grace, "it is much pleasanter to stroll through these shaded paths, than to whirl over a hot and dusty road like a steam-engine, with no time to see any thing as you pass."

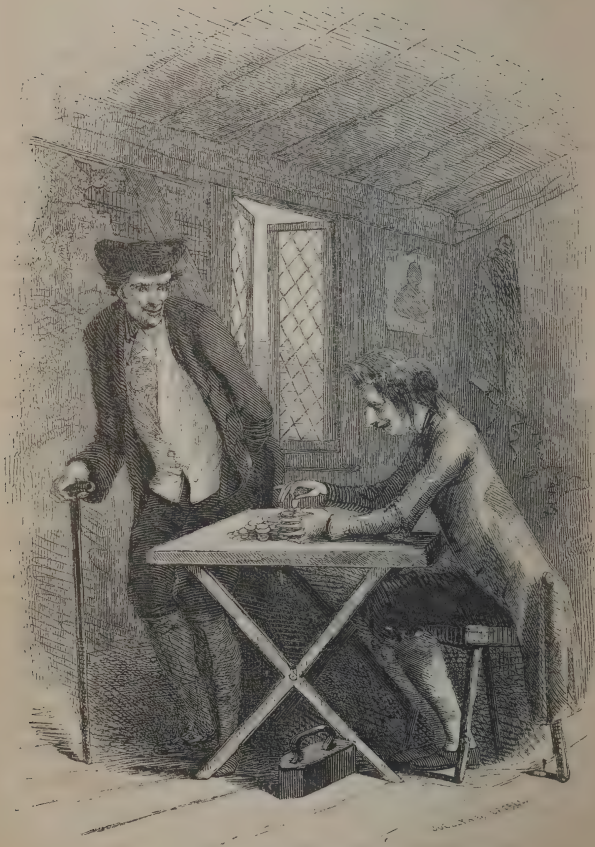
"Yes," continued Kate; "and here you can run and jump, or do just as you like: for my part, I don't see the great pleasure of driving."

"Oh, it is very well for you girls to talk so," retorted her brother, with an air of superiority; "but we boys have different notions. I shall have a pair of ponies yet, come what may, only I wish I had them now, to drive about as young Morse does. I wish father was as rich as Mr. Morse."

Aunt Elsie took no part in the conversation, although she heard it all: she preferred allowing her little people to express their various tastes and opinions freely, and seldom made a remark, unless directly referred to.

Tea awaited them upon their return, and after it was duly discussed, the party assembled upon the piazza, and several of the children petitioned Aunt Elsie for a story, as some days had elapsed since they had heard one; and even Robert forgot the ponies for a time, and joined in the request.

The good old lady, who liked to gratify her little people, and hoped to impart a lesson besides, did not refuse the request; but sending for the old portfolio, read to them the



MASTER SNIP.

Story of Master Snip.

In one of the narrowest and dirtiest alleys of a certain great city, stood a very tall old house, so begrimed with smoke and dirt, that whether it was built of brick, wood, or stone, the most curious could not decide: and up a great many flights of rickety stairs, in the topmost story or garret of this gloomy old house, lived a miserable tailor, whom we shall call Master Snip, which is as good a name as any, and one that many a man of the same trade has borne besides.

Master Snip, then, the tailor, lived after a fashion in this lofty abode, with no better companions than the rats, who often visited him in a neighborly way, to beg a crumb or two. But as the tailor's larder was very poorly supplied, the rats would soon have grown as thin as himself, had they depended on his supplies, which in truth they did not, as the fearful onslaughts upon certain great cheeses in some well-filled dairies in the neighborhood could abundantly testify.

Poor Master Snip had but little to do in the way of employment at his trade, and so he

amused himself peeping from his high window down into the houses which stood upon the main street, feasting his eyes upon the goodly display of viands which were each day there served up in the most tempting manner, and making himself acquainted with the various professions and habits of the fortunate dwellers therein. In this manner he may be said to have looked down upon his neighbors.

But the particular feelings with which Master Snip looked down upon these people, whose indoor economy he so eagerly studied, were very far from being scornful or contemptuous. His first peep came from idleness, his next, curiosity; his third, envy; and then covetousness crept into his heart.

"How comes it," he soliloquized, "that some are made rich and others poor without any fault of their own? Here I may starve to death on a crust in this garret, while my neighbor feasts on rich food in an elegant home. These things are not right. If I could only grow rich now! Yes, and rich I would be if I only knew how to begin."

This train of thoughts often filled the poor tailor's mind; and once as he sat indulging them

in the twilight, he suddenly heard a voice in reply. It came from his old goose (which is, as you may know, the tailor's pressing iron).

"I will make you rich," said the goose, "if you use me well: I will lay you a golden egg every week."

"You, indeed!" retorted the tailor, in a contemptuous tone. "What are you but a bit of iron? *You* lay golden eggs! I should like to see them."

"So I thought," answered the voice, dryly; "but if I rest here idle on the work-board forever, no golden eggs will you ever see."

"And here am I rusting in the patch," cried a sharp little voice, which the tailor knew was the needle's, "when if you would but use me well, I would spin you golden thread enough to weave a whole coat, finer than any of your neighbors'."

"Did I ever hear such nonsense!" returned Master Snip, with a jeering laugh: "why you are nothing but an insignificant needle, and a short one at that; and you have but one eye besides: *you* spin golden thread! what a joke!"

The needle, who rather prided herself upon her abilities, felt quite indignant at this.

"You will find my one eye of more use than

your two," she replied, sharply, "if you do nothing else with them than just to stare at your neighbors."

The tailor was meditating a cutting reply to this remark, when he suddenly found himself tumbling off the rickety three-legged stool whereon he was perched; and upon recovering himself, the idea of the goose or the needle holding up a conversation, seemed so absurd, that he laughed aloud at his own conceit, and concluded he had been dreaming.

The next morning, however, finding the closet empty, and not a crumb left for breakfast, Master Snip produced his last remaining piece of work, and thrusting the goose in the stove, threaded his needle, and began to stitch hurriedly away, anxious to prove the truth of his vision.

But, alas! the eager tailor pulled his thread so hard that it snapped continually, till at last he threw down the needle in a rage, and snatching up the goose (which, if it had not been iron, would surely have been roasted to a crisp), he essayed to press the seam, but burnt his cloth in the endeavor!

Then the poor tailor flung aside the goose in mingled rage and despair.

"This comes of listening to idle babblers," he cried, "or believing in dreams: it is I who am the goose now."

So he suffered the iron to cool on the spot where he threw it, and the needle to remain pertly stuck up in the patch, while he resumed his favorite position at the window.

How many hours passed in this way, the tailor himself never knew, for he had become so used to going hungry, that the sight of his neighbor's viands seemed like a meal to him, as he allowed himself to imagine all he would say and do, were he in their place. But at last he was recalled to realities by a low tap at the door, and without waiting a response, a little figure opened it, and walked in.

The tailor jumped down from his seat in the window, and confronted his visitor.

He was little and old, with restless eyes that seemed like living coals as they turned searchingly towards every corner of the miserable garret. His face was yellow as gold, and crossed with a perfect network of wrinkles; and his whole countenance wore a pinched and starved look, not unlike the tailor himself.

"Will you put a stitch in my coat, friend?" he

said, in a grating, husky voice, "just out of charity, for I am very poor;" and he displayed a shockingly tattered old coat as he spoke.

"Charity and poor, forsooth!" returned the tailor, scoffingly. "Who is poorer or more in need of charity than myself? No, no, friend, charity don't buy bread. I work for gold."

"Gold!" said the stranger, with a sudden lighting up of the eyes like a flame. "Do you love gold better than charity? Will you turn a beggar from your door unaided, because he has not gold to buy a kindness?"

"I love not beggars," retorted the tailor, gloomily, for the fiery flash of the old man's eyes seemed to burn into his heart. "I love not beggars, seeing I am one myself; neither love I charity, for it reaches me not here in my high abode. I am above such weaknesses of men; therefore get thee gone, old man, or give me gold—red, shining gold. This I love better than mercy—better than life; for what is life without it? Gold, give me gold!" and he clutched the empty air, as he spoke, with a phrensied grasp.

The old man fixed his searching eyes upon the tailor's excited face: he neither besought his pity nor turned to go away.

"I like you well," he said at last. "Now sew my coat: see, here is the gold you covet, and more shall follow."

To the infinite surprise of the tailor, the strange old man produced a piece of gold from his pocket, and held it temptingly displayed upon his palm.

The tailor's eyes glistened at the sight.

"So you are not a beggar, after all," he said. "Who are you, then?"

"Men call me by many names," replied the other, with a low mocking laugh; "but my title matters little to you, if I prove a good master and pay you well in gold. Come, let me judge of your work; and here is your price."

Mechanically Master Snip hunted up the neglected needle and shears. He was puzzled and bewildered by this strange adventure, and gave himself a sly pinch to make sure he was awake: for he thought it might be but a vision, like that of the needle and goose.

The stranger's torn coat was soon neatly repaired, and the piece of gold slipped into the palm of the expectant tailor, who turned it over and over with a delighted gaze. It was not a joyous look of relief from present want, however, that gleamed from the tailor's eyes, but a gloating,

fond expression, that said, as plain as eyes could speak,

"I have got you at last, and mean to keep you."

This look was not lost upon the stranger, who said, while an odd smile wrinkled about his mouth,

"Well, and what use will you make of the gold, friend Snip? buy bread, I suppose?"

With his eyes still fixed thoughtfully upon the piece of money, the tailor replied,

"I will keep it. The sight of gold gladdens my heart, and I forget hunger. No, no; this shining face shall bring good company yet: he will make sweet music as he chinks against another. Ah! methinks I can already hear the sound."

"The chink of gold is sweet to your ears," said the queer little man. "Good! you shall have plenty. Know me as the lord of a rich domain, the master of many servants. You shall make all their livery. What say you?"

Master Snip looked up with an incredulous air: he doubted the words of the stranger; but poor as he looked, he had already paid one gold piece, and might not others follow?

His visitor seemed to divine his thoughts, and his yellow face brightened as he continued:

"I will send one of my servants to-morrow with a coat to be made, Master Snip; and if your work pleases me, I will mind and keep my word: we shall see. You will own me yet for your master; and the price that is paid shall be gold—hard, shining gold."

With a chuckling laugh the old man turned and left the garret as he spoke.

Nothing but the piece of gold that yet rested in his palm could convince Master Snip that all which had passed was not a dream—a vision sent to cheat him; but there was no denying the reality of the piece itself. He rung it on the work-board; he chinked it against the goose (in want of a better metal); he tasted it to be sure it contained no brass: he dropped it in his pocket, and tried to forget it was there; and then jerked it out suddenly, almost expecting to find it changed into a gingernut, as he had heard fairy gold was apt to be.

But this was no fairy gold, no antique coin dug up from a buried treasure long hidden in the earth. It was respectable, new, shining gold, bearing date the year before, and with all due and lawful signs of the mint upon it.

Master Snip had better employment now than

watching his neighbors; his golden dreams had at least a foundation, and he devised a thousand ways of giving his solitary treasure a companion. Among all his hopes and plans the queer old stranger's promise was not forgotten; and when the tailor at last lay down to sleep, his newly obtained treasure was hidden next his heart, and certainly filled his mind with wild, vague dreams.

With the earliest dawn the tailor arose; and as the pangs of hunger could no longer be controlled, he crept down the rickety stairs, still hugging his precious gold to his bosom, and passing through the alley into the street, begged at the door of one of the mansions for a mouthful of bread. A dish of broken meats was handed him, from which he made a hearty repast; and the consciousness that he carried in his breast the means of procuring a comfortable meal, seemed to give an added keenness to his appetite.

Refreshed with this and a draught of water from a neighboring pump, Master Snip returned to his garret; and the first object that greeted him upon his entrance, was the figure of a stranger, who carried a parcel, and was gazing about as if in search of some one.

"Are you Master Snip?" asked he, as the

tailor entered. "I have heard you work well: so here is a coat which must be finished by to-morrow night; and this is the thread to sew it. Be punctual, and your price shall be paid at once."

So saying, the stranger turned and went away, leaving our tailor somewhat surprised at this piece of good luck. He concluded that this must be one of the old man's servants, and eagerly unfastened the bundle to see the style of livery.

But it was a sober-colored coat enough, with neither gay facings nor gilt buttons to distinguish it from the suit of any good citizen. The broadcloth, though, was of the finest kind, and the thread awakened the tailor's wonder, for it seemed to be of spun gold, fine as a hair, and flexible as silk.

"Ho, ho," thought Master Snip, "my new customer has his servants' coats embroidered, but I can do no such fancy-work;" and he turned the cloth about, expecting to find a pattern traced thereon—but there was none.

So the tailor at last sat down to his work, and stitched away right merrily. The golden thread worked famously: it neither tangled nor snapped, and made all the seams look beautifully besides.

In due time the coat was finished, and a skein of the gold thread left, besides a few odd needlefuls. Master Snip carefully folded up the odd bits of thread and put them in the pocket of the new coat; but the skein he laid aside. He had scarcely done so, when, looking up, he beheld his queer little old visitor, who stood grinning upon him.

"So, the coat is finished, Master Snip," he said, in his cracked, harsh tones, and examining the work as he spoke. "Very well done; and what is this in the pocket?"

"Some thread that was left," answered the tailor. "As it seemed to be gold, it is but right to return it."

"Truly thou art an honest tailor," returned the little man, with a mocking laugh; "for while remembering others, thou dost not forget thyself." And reaching across the work-board as he spoke, he drew forth the golden skein from its concealment and held it dangling upon his long fingers, as he fixed his keen fiery glance on the detected tailor.

"You found my golden thread pleasant to use," said the queer customer, after a pause, "and so you kept some for yourself. That was prudent:

I like it. Now where is your piece of gold? not changed, eh?"

"It is here," replied the abashed tailor, who knew not whether the little old fellow was sneering at him or not, and drawing the piece from his breast as he spoke.

"Good!" returned the other, in a decided tone: and taking the coin from the reluctant fingers of Master Snip, he rapidly unwound the golden skein and strung the piece of money upon it, much to the surprise of its owner, who watched every movement with trembling eagerness; for the tailor had never noticed any hole in the piece of gold through which even so fine a thread might pass. There it hung, however, dangling before his eyes like a locket; and the little man, fastening it about the tailor's neck, said—

"Wear this as a sign that you are bound to work for me so long as it remains upon your neck. I will find you enough to do, and pay you well in the bargain; but should you lay it aside, our agreement is broken—you are no longer servant of mine. What say you, Master Snip? do you love gold well enough to own me for a master?"

"That in truth do I," returned the happy tailor, now relieved from the fear of having offended,

which he had felt. "And he is the best master who gives me the most shining gold, let his name be what it may."

"Then our bargain is made," said the queer old man, with a chuckling laugh. "You shall yet pile your gold in heaps, and I will help you count it."

So saying, he nodded familiarly to the wondering Snip, and left the garret.

Scarcely had he gone when the owner of the coat came in; and taking the new garment, paid the price in several pieces of new bright gold, and went his way.

From this time Master Snip was never unemployed. Work poured in upon him from his new master; and innumerable were the hanks of golden thread that he at length collected, while his piles of gold constantly increased.

He was a very droll personage, this new employer of Master Snip; and the lucky tailor often puzzled his wits and strained his eyes on a Sunday, when he stole into the street a few minutes, to discover some of his servants, of whom he seemed to possess a host. Sometimes the tailor thought he detected the gleaming of the golden thread in the seams of some passer's coat; but

upon following the person, he would oftentimes prove to be a sober citizen of great wealth and high repute, on his way perhaps to the sanctuary; so of course the tailor thought himself mistaken, and very likely he was.

By and by Master Snip went no more into the streets even on Sunday. Every leisure moment was passed in gloating over his heaps of gold, and counting the pieces, one by one, to make sure all were safe. Oftentimes his strange customer would come in upon him unawares while he was thus employed, and looking over the tailor's shoulder, would count the money with him, and extol his prudence; while his searching eyes lighted up as with a flame within.

Though possessed of wealth sufficient to live quite as well, if not better, than the neighbors he once envied, Master Snip's miserable garret remained unimproved. It was even more dilapidated than formerly, for there were great open places in the roof, through which the sleet and rain poured in, and the bleak winds whistled on their way. The larder was so scantily supplied that the rats ran away in despair, and left the miserly tailor alone in his glory.

But the chink of the precious gold made the

perfect happiness of Master Snip. Hunger and cold were forgotten as he feasted his eyes on the glittering heaps, and warmed his heart in their shining light.

What he had at first coveted as a *means* of procuring enjoyment, now became the *end* of all his hopes; and thus day after day passed on, until years had rolled away, and each one found him more wretched, more starving, yet richer than before.

Meanwhile the golden skein and piece of money which his mysterious employer had fastened about the neck of the tailor, grew heavier every day. The thread once so fine had now become a great chain; and the piece of gold hung heavy like a crushing weight upon his heart. The light livery of the servant had deepened into the strong fetters of the slave; and the tailor no longer had the power, even had he felt the will, to leave his master.

But of all this Master Snip happily knew nothing. He wore his chains easily: they never chafed him, because he did not try to cast them off.

Time wore away. Master Snip grew old: his eyes were dim, and he could no longer thread his

needle. His hand trembled, and he burned the seam which he strove to press. So the tailor abandoned his work-board, and spent all his days in commune with his gold.

As he was thus engaged one day when the twilight was creeping on apace, the voice of his master suddenly smote upon his ear with an angry tone:

"How now, Master Snip! here are piles of work undone. Up and finish them at once, or you are no longer servant of mine."

"I am old," replied the tailor, in a drivelling voice; "and I cannot see: my hands tremble, else would I fain work more."

"Too old to work!" returned the yellow old man, in angry tones: "then are you not fit to serve me. Give back my badge of service."

Poor Master Snip essayed in vain to lift the chain from his feeble shoulders, that trembled beneath its weight. He could not so much as move it; so hugging it closer to his bosom, he entreated,

"I have served you faithfully: bear with me yet a while longer;" and again he turned fondly towards his heaps of gold.

"Yes, you have served me faithfully," returned the strange little man, in a scornful voice; "and

well have you been repaid: here are piles of yellow, shining gold. Have they brought one comfort for yourself or others? Are you better or happier in their possession?"

The tailor's appealing look, as he spread his feeble hands above the golden heaps, seemed to reply.

"*They* have made your happiness, but you must leave them now. You can serve me here no more, but are bound to me forever. Come."

The form of the mysterious old man seemed to dilate as he spoke, and he passed his arm about the shivering frame of the wretched tailor, who suddenly felt himself borne through the air, stretching his arms towards the heaps of treasure as he went.

Master Snip was taken up from the pavement insensible; and when at last he shudderingly returned to consciousness, it was to find himself stretched, with bruised body and broken limb, upon his wretched straw pallet. For a while his brain was confused, his mind wandered, and he puzzled those whom sympathy had gathered around him, by his incoherent ravings about his heaps of gold.

But when at last the poor tailor recovered, which he did after a great deal of suffering (for dependant as he was upon his poor neighbors for kindness and attention, and his rich ones for means to supply his wants, his recovery was but slow), his first effort was to reach the old closet where his treasure had been stored : it was quite empty ; not a vestige remained of the golden heaps or the hanks of thread. Master Snip rubbed his forehead, and marvelled ; and well he might.

He was told that he fell from his garret window, where he had been seen sitting for some time, as was his habit : it was supposed he had fallen asleep, and thus lost his balance ; but the tailor shook his head and sighed ; he was sure that the terrible little old man had dropped him there. But of this adventure he wisely said nothing to his neighbors ; especially as viewing himself in the cracked glass one day, he saw his countenance reflected, pale and emaciated to be sure, but bearing no marks of old age upon it. So the tailor concluded that he or the garret was bewitched ; and soon, by means of assistance, removed to a lower room, carrying his needle and goose along.

Here, under more cheerful influences, and without the power of looking down upon his neighbors, now that he had left his lofty abode, Master Snip betook himself again to work. His experience of gold-hoarding, whether real or fancied, had the good effect of making him much more reasonable in his desires. And now, as he stitched cheerfully away, the sharp little needle did its duty bravely, and the old goose never scorched a seam; and though the needle did not really spin golden thread, nor the iron goose lay eggs of the same precious material, they did much better, for they supported their owner in cheerful comfort, and taught Master Snip the important truth, that contented industry makes happier hearts than the stores of a miser's gold.

"I am so glad it turned out to be a dream after all," said Lilie, drawing a sigh of relief, as Aunt Elsie paused: "because it was really too terrible for that wicked old man to fly away with poor Master Snip."

"Terrible, indeed," returned Robert, thoughtfully. "Aunt Elsie's story teaches the fearful

end of covetousness; and she meant me to apply it, because I am so apt to crave what I see, and long to be rich: though I do not think I should ever become a miser, as the poor tailor did."

"I should hope not, indeed," replied Aunt Elsie, in a kind, yet grave tone; "but whatever may be the end in view, the acquisition of wealth, if allowed to become an absorbing desire, will in time engross all the energies, and totally unfit the mind for any higher or nobler pursuit; and this is but one of the many evils which eagerness for riches brings in its train."

"And yet," added Mabel, "it must be pleasant to possess the means of doing so much good: a rich man has a great deal in his power, he can confer happiness on so many."

"He has also a heavy responsibility resting upon him," continued Aunt Elsie; "for he is but the steward of his Master, and must render an account of the just use of the means here intrusted him."

"Yes," added Arthur; "and I have often thought that those with moderate means accomplished quite as much as the rich in their way. Little streams fertilize the earth, as well as great

rivers, though nobody notices them as they glide quietly along."

"Well said, Arthur," returned Harry Wilder. "I am for moderation in all things: one need never sigh for a carriage, so long as his limbs can carry him bravely."

"What a fuss people make about money!" cried Kate, who, having never known a privation, could not feel its importance. "I don't see why they cannot get along very well without it, or at least, with very little. I am sure I like a plain calico frock, that I am not afraid of tearing, better than the gayest silk in the world; and would rather race through the fields, and jump over hedges, than to ride in a coach drawn by the finest ponies Robert could drive."

"Pretty well, Kate," said Fred Lee: "you are the first young lady I ever heard openly disdain a fine carriage and dress. You would make an admirable little squaw, and even then set an example of simplicity. But, all joking apart, I have often thought it would be rather pleasant to be poor, and entirely dependent on one's own ingenuity and industry for support. It sharpens the wits, to keep them constantly busy; and when you have but little, you enjoy it."

"You would like to be a second Robinson Crusoe, perhaps," suggested Frank, laughing.

"Well," cried Edward, "some of us prefer to be rich, and others would rather be poor: let us put it to vote, and see which side carries the day. Aunt Elsie's vote is first."

"I doubt whether any of you are capable of judging yet," now spoke Aunt Elsie; "but I shall certainly cast my vote with Harry's; for as the truth is said to exist between two extremes, so contentment is found in moderate possessions, and to me the prayer of the pious Agur seems equally wise and beautiful:

"Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be poor and steal: lest I be full, and deny the Lord."

CHAPTER VII.

The little party had been down in the village making some purchases for Aunt Elsie and themselves. On their way homeward, they called upon a poor widow, who was a kind of pensioner of Aunt Elsie's, and in whom the children felt much interested.

She lived in a very plain little house by the road-side: it was not tasteful enough to be properly called a cottage; and the small garden-patch in front was filled with an odd mixture of vegetables and flowers. Large cabbages jostled aside the hardy ladyslippers, that would spring up just wherever they pleased; a little bed of radishes, nicely bordered with peppergrass, flourished securely under the protection of a lilac-bush, that grew in the path; ragged-sailors and columbines were in sociable companionship with parsley and onions; while around the picket-fence, and away over the beds, in whatever crooked course they chose to take, the nasturtium vines scrambled

about, mingling their brilliant blossoms indiscriminately among vegetables and flowers, claiming no place with either class, but combining in themselves both ornament and use. Tall sunflowers grew along the fence, like sentries guarding the inclosure; but their services were altogether needless, since no passer-by deigned so much as a glance towards this disorderly garden, which certainly did not appear very inviting.

Uncultivated and neglected as it appeared, however, the poor widow derived from it some support. She had no person to take any care of it but herself, and she had but little time to spare, else it would not have worn so deserted a look.

The widow had known better days, but now she lived in two rooms with her only daughter, who was blind, and took much of her mother's time, and all her love and care. The poorly furnished rooms were scrupulously neat and clean; and it was no wonder that the out-door work was neglected, when so much time was necessarily employed within.

The blind daughter was not the poor widow's only child: she had one son, who had gone to sea many months before, and of whom his

mother had not heard since his departure; but she never gave up the hope of his return.

The widow herself was lame, and thus poor and afflicted, she might well have sunk beneath her sorrows, had not a strong religious faith upheld her, and a hopeful spirit cheered her on.

She welcomed the little party warmly when they entered, and received with thankfulness the things they brought. After a while they led her to speak of herself, and were surprised at the cheerful trust with which she looked forward to the future.

"The doctor says that Liddy's eyes are better," she said, in continuance of their conversation; "and I hope her sight will yet be restored; and though I have not heard a single word of her brother for many, many months, I hope yet to see him again before I die."

After their return home, the children spoke frequently of the poor widow, and Aunt Elsie listened with interest to all they told her of their conversation.

The kind old lady shook her head and sighed when they related the widow's hopes regarding her daughter's sight and son's return.

"I am afraid poor Liddy will never see again,"

she said. "All hope in this case must end in disappointment: several physicians of eminence have pronounced her incurable; and yet it is strange how readily hope springs up again in the heart, even from the ashes of despair."

"Her mother seems very much encouraged now," returned Edith, "and is denying herself in every way to procure the medicines which have been advised. Would it not be better for some friend to tell her at once how useless all her efforts are? It is sorrowful to see her thus deceiving herself with a hope that can never be fulfilled."

"I think not," replied Aunt Elsie, "for she finds pleasure in hoping: without it what a dreary blank her future would be! Besides, it is a satisfaction to her to feel that she has done what she could."

"Do you know," said Harry Wilder, looking up suddenly with one of his queer, yet thoughtful smiles, "that I sometimes think hope a decided cheat, and one that should not be admitted among the desirables at all, she so often deceives and misleads folks?"

"You must take care to have your hope well grounded," returned Mabel.

"But a well-grounded hope amounts to almost a certainty," said Arthur; "and then it nearly ceases to be a hope at all."

"I don't see how we could live without hope," remarked Grace: "it is as natural to hope as to breathe: we cannot help it."

"You are all conversing very sensibly, I dare say," now chimed in Fred; "but as I don't feel capable of taking any part in the conversation, *I hope* Aunt Elsie will read us a story; and if she will, I shall then be done with hope, because I shall have nothing left to hope for."

"You are getting rather logical, Fred," said Harry Wilder, laughingly.

"Well," cried Lilie, "it seems to me hopes and wishes must be just alike, because poor Liddy's mother wishes her eyes would get well, I know, and I wish Aunt Elsie would read a story for us. Will you, dear Aunt Elsie?" she added, coaxingly: "kind fairies always grant good wishes, you know."

"But is this a good wish, Lilie?" asked the old lady, with a smile "Are you quite sure it is unselfish, and that all the rest of your companions are as ready to hear as yourself and Fred? You

know I like to have a full audience present, and perhaps all may not care to listen to-day."

"Oh, yes, Aunt Elsie, you know we all like to hear your stories," cried many voices; and after a little more talking and bustling, the whole party quietly settled down to listen in silence, while the indulgent Aunt Elsie read to them a story which she called

The Singing Bird from Fairy-Land.

Far away in a distant country, where neither you nor I have never been, and it is not at all likely ever will be, there lived once upon a time a poor little boy, who had neither father nor mother, nor, indeed, any one in the world to love and take care of him.

A wood-cutter had found him in the woods (though how he came there I do not know), and given him something to eat, allowing the child to go with him as he worked; but when, after many seasons, the man had sold wood enough, he wanted to return home; but the wood-cutter had a wife and plenty of children of his own, and therefore

left poor little Kurt behind him to get along as best he could.

Kurt begged very hard to go with the wood-cutter, but the man answered that he had mouths enough to fill already; and so giving the lad a loaf of bread, and some goat's-milk cheese, bade him good-by, and trudged homeward.

When the little boy found himself all alone in the great woods, he felt very sad and frightened. The wood-cutter had often left him alone before, and he did not think of being afraid; but now he knew the man would never come back, and so felt very desolate.

He had never been out of the woods in his life, and he dared not try and find the way for fear of the wild beasts, who often went prowling about. He ran a little way after the wood-cutter, but the man threatened to whip him if he followed, and the poor little fellow was forced to go sorrowfully back.

All day long Kurt wandered dolefully about, crying as if his heart would break. When night came he sat down under the trees, and looked up at the bright moon, wondering whether he should find his way out of the forest if he followed the paths he took. As he sat there so sorrowful in

the pale moonlight, suddenly he heard a soft little voice call—

"Kurt, Kurt! what makes you so sad?"

Kurt looked all around, but saw nobody: he looked up, there was only the blue sky and the bright moon gazing so steadily on him, but never speaking a word: he cast his eyes down, there was only the green grass and the streaming moonshine. Kurt thought he must be dreaming.

Presently a small twig of the tree beneath which he was lying, trembled as if with the weight of a little bird, and again he heard the same voice saying,

"Tell me, Kurt, why you are sad?"

Now the little boy looked up at the slender spray, and there seated upon it, and swaying to and fro in the fresh night air, was a tiny figure, clad in robes bright as moonshine, with wings like a butterfly of many brilliant colors, and a crown changeable with the hues of the rainbow upon its head. The little being looked at Kurt with a kind air, and said once more,

"What is the matter, little Kurt? Tell me: I am Queen of the Fairies."

Then Kurt did not feel at all afraid of the

beautiful little creature who had such a sweet voice, and such tender eyes, and was a queen besides: so he told her how the wood-cutter had left him alone in the woods with no one in the world to take care of him, and he was afraid he should starve in the forest, and die.

The fairy queen listened very kindly to all he told her, and then said,

"Come with me, Kurt, and I will try to do something to help you."

She floated down from the tree as she spoke, and beckoned Kurt to follow. The boy obeyed, and, led by the gleaming of her bright wings, made his way through the green alleys of the wood, until they came to a thick clump of trees, where there seemed no opening. Still the little fairy floated on amid the leaves; and Kurt too pressed forward, when to his surprise the branches parted, making a path for him, and closing as he passed, until he found himself standing in a beautiful meadow, where the moonlight streamed full and clear, and fountains of crystal water went sparkling up like jewels in the moonshine. Birds, whose breasts and wings seemed set with rubies and precious stones, flew gayly about in groves of graceful trees, singing all the while

such wild sweet strains, as made the boy's heart thrill with strange delight. Flowers far more brilliant than any which grew in the woods, sprang up at every step, or hung in long garlands from tree to tree; while crowds of lovely little creatures, only less beautiful than the fairy queen herself, hid in the flower-cups, or peeped from beneath the leaves, sometimes swinging by the flower-stems, and then joining hands in a mazy dance, as they sung,

> "While earth's weary mortals sleep,
> We our fairy vigils keep,
> And where the moonbeams brightest glance,
> Trip our gay and joyous dance."

Little Kurt looked around in bewildered ecstasy; and well he might, for he was in Fairy-land, where a mortal had rarely been before, and few if any have ever been since.

Then the fairy queen led the boy into a shaded grove, and bade her attendants set before him honey and fruits of many kinds, while she sipped a drop of distilled flower-dew from a goblet cut out of a single diamond.

After the boy had rested and refreshed himself, he roamed about at will amid the beautiful trees,

and even grew so familiar with the little fays as to join in their sports. He was happy, and forgot all about his sorrows. He thought he should like to live so forever, and was sorry when the queen called him and said,

"You must leave us now, Kurt, for morning will soon dawn; but choose first something to take with you in remembrance of your visit to Fairy-land."

Kurt longed to say he should like best to stay; but the fairy queen seemed to understand his thoughts, for she added,

"You think now that you would be happy to live here forever; but you are wrong, Kurt. You are not a fairy, you know, and will by and by grow to be a man. Then you would soon be tired of such a life as we lead, and want to go back to mankind again. Choose, therefore, what you will, and then you must leave us."

Kurt saw that it was vain to resist the will of the fairy queen, and, with a sigh, cast a regretful look over the beautiful Fairy-land. Just then an exquisite little bird perched itself upon a branch near by, and sung a bewildering song. The plumage of this little bird shone like burnished gold; his wings flashed in the moonlight with ever va-

rying colors, and his breast sparkled with the dazzling lustre of a diamond.

Kurt stretched forth his hand.

"I will take this beautiful bird," he said.

"You have chosen wisely, Kurt," returned the fairy queen, approvingly. "This little songster will cheer and assist you: besides, you will never feel utterly desolate while he sings the songs of Fairy-land; and he will sometimes give you good advice."

She took the bird in her hand as she spoke, and fastening a slender silver thread beneath its wings, bade Kurt knot the end of the thread firmly about his wrist. He did so; and the little bird came at once and nestled in his bosom.

Then the fairy queen bade Kurt follow her, until they came to the apparently impenetrable clump of trees through which they had entered. Here all the fairies gathered around, saying, in their soft musical voices,

"Good-by, little Kurt—Good-by, little Kurt."

And when the boy attempted to reply, suddenly the first morning sunbeam fell upon them: the whole scene vanished; and Kurt, to his great surprise, found himself lying beneath the trees just where the fairy queen had found him.

He arose and looked about him. Every thing was still. The birds had not yet left their nests; and the great sun sent one quivering ray of light among the leaves full upon the spot where Kurt had rested.

The boy sighed.

"I had a lovely dream last night," he said; "but it is broad daylight now, and what am I to do? I shall die if I stay here; and how am I to find my way out of this forest?"

Just then he heard a sudden gush of strange sweet melody that filled his heart with joy; and amid the variety of trills and quavers, he distinguished these words:—

"Kurt, if you turn towards the west,
And follow the sun till he sinks to rest,
Then onward again when the night is past,
You may find your way out of the wood at last."

It was the voice of the fairy bird; and as Kurt looked up, there, sure enough, was the beautiful little fellow, his brilliant plumage flashing in the morning sunshine, as he soared above the boy, and sung his wonderful song.

And now Kurt felt inspired with new courage.

"So I have not been dreaming, after all," he thought; "and this charming little bird will help me to find my way out of the forest. How fortunate I am in possessing him!"

Then the boy took his bread and cheese, of which he ate very little, because he knew not how long it would have to last him; and turning his face towards the west, walked on with a light heart, the beautiful bird sometimes nestling in his bosom, and then soaring up high as the silver thread would let him, and singing such sweet and bewildering strains—recalling to Kurt his visit to Fairy-land, and all the lovely things he had seen there.

So he travelled on that day and the next, resting at night beneath the trees, and awakened at early dawn by the cheering strains of his fairy bird.

But when on the third day he had eaten his last crust, and faint and weary sat down to rest, while before and about him nothing but the tall trees could be seen, his courage failed, and he wept aloud.

"You have deceived me," he said to the bird. "I will never believe you again. How sorry I am that I have wandered so far away in the

woods! for plenty of berries grew near where I was; and perhaps the wood-cutter might have come back after all. Now if he should, he will not be able to find me; and there is not a berry about here, nor a drop of water that I can see. I shall starve and die at last; and it is all through you, deceitful fairy bird. I wish I had never seen you at all."

The fairy bird seemed to understand the boy, but he did not mind his reproaches in the least; for circling gayly about Kurt's head, and then nestling in his bosom, he sang another strain:

"Courage, Kurt, and travel on,
You may find the way yet before daylight is gone,"

chirrupped the bird.

Though Kurt had declared but a moment before that he would never listen to the fairy bird again, yet he jumped briskly up when he heard these words, and walked on with renewed courage.

Presently he came to an unexpected opening; and there, just before him, was a cluster of houses, with the bright lights twinkling here and there from the windows, for it was now growing dark.

Kurt gladly hastened into the town, and again felt grateful to the little bird, who had not deceived him after all.

He readily obtained a supper and night's rest at one of the houses, and early the next morning arose to look about him, and find something to do. His fairy bird sung cheeringly; and urged on by him, Kurt went from one door to another, seeking work, but none could he find. Several people assisted him from charity, but when night came again, the poor little boy had no place of shelter. He slept that night in the open air; but the following day, inspired once more by the song of the bird, he journeyed on to the next town; and here he was fortunate enough to find an employer.

As he was trudging along the road, he saw a man driving a large load of wood; and then the little fairy bird sang to him again, telling him to ask the man for work.

So Kurt, obeying the voice of the bird, ran up to the man, crying out,

"Wood-cutter, will you give me something to do? I can cut wood."

"Can you so, my little fellow?" returned the man: "then you shall go out into the woods

with me to-morrow, and I will see what you can do."

The wood-cutter questioned little Kurt, who told all his story. He then went home with the man, and as he lay down to rest at night thought,

"What a blessed chance it is that I have this wonderful fairy bird to put such lucky ideas into my mind."

And now Kurt went out every day into the forest with the wood-cutter, who paid him a little for his work every week, and let him live at his house besides.

The fairy bird sung away louder than ever after Kurt began to work; and now it urged him to learn to read and write, so that in time he might earn still more.

The boy listened to the song of the bird, and determined to save all his wages to accomplish this end.

He carried his savings in a little purse in his bosom: and one sultry noonday as he lay asleep beneath a tree, near the roadside, his purse was stolen from him, and his singing bird taken besides.

When poor Kurt awoke, and missed his money,

he felt very miserable; and when he no longer heard the cheering voice of his fairy bird, he gave up in despair. All his hard-earned savings were lost in a moment—all his plans frustrated; and poor Kurt felt sad enough.

As he indulged in these desponding thoughts, suddenly he heard the faint singing of a bird in the distance: his heart beat fast. The sound came nearer and nearer, until his darling fairy bird once more nestled in his bosom, and sung,

"Though your purse may be stolen, still I remain,
And perhaps you may get back your money again."

Kurt felt quite encouraged at this, and ran rapidly up the road, thinking he might overtake the thief, while his little bird constantly cheered him on.

But this time the song of the fairy bird proved useless: Kurt ran until quite out of breath, and reflecting how foolish was the chase, returned sadly to his home.

For many days the boy was very sorrowful, and even the song of his bird failed to cheer him; but at last its strains found an echo in his heart, and he went to work merrily again.

In time, Kurt earned money enough to re-

place that which was lost, and so learned to read and write as well as any boy in the town.

As he grew up to manhood, the singing bird constantly cheered and encouraged him; and whenever disappointment or trouble arose, the joyous strains of the fairy songster drove all desponding fears from his heart.

The mischievous little bird deceived him sometimes, to be sure, but Kurt learned at last to interpret its fairy songs aright, and never allowed it to bewilder or mislead him.

When the crops failed, or the fruit-trees were blasted, Kurt never sunk into despondency, even when all his neighbors were discouraged, for the fairy bird sung to him of a plentiful harvest, and fine fruits in the next season; and Kurt believed him, and so persevered in his efforts for success.

It was wonderful what power the song of this little bird possessed: it sustained him in cheerful industry through difficulties and disappointments, until he became a thriving and prosperous farmer; and though there were many who said his bird sang too loudly, and deceived him sadly in bidding him seek the hand of his master's daughter, when there were other rich suitors in plenty, Kurt felt that he had good reason to

trust to the fairy bird, and so persevered, though ofttimes with trembling.

And when the event proved that his bird had not sung in vain, Kurt loved to sit at his own fireside in happy thankfulness, and in enumerating all his blessings, never failed to mention with gratitude, "The Singing Bird from Fairy-land."

"And the poor widow has a singing bird too," exclaimed Ellen Lee, as Aunt Elsie paused. "I understand very well: it is Hope."

"The widow's bird sings of the safe return of her absent son, and poor Liddy's restored sight: how cheerless her life would be without hope!" added Frank.

"Cheerless enough," said Harry. "After all, it is better to hope, even if we are deceived at last."

"Hope on, hope ever, is a very good motto, and I mean to adopt it," cried Fred. "When I grow rich I shall have it painted upon my carriage; and in the mean time, there is the tea-bell, and I hope Dinah has not forgotten the strawberry short-cake," he added, interrupting himself.

This summons interrupted the conversation, and a party of young people from Mr. Helme's joining them after tea, the evening was concluded with a dance upon the smooth green lawn; and Aunt Elsie, as she fondly looked upon the joyous group, thought that no vision of fairy-land could be lovelier than the scene before her, and no music sweeter than the silvery voices of childhood, as they sang and danced like a band of midsummer fays, in the bright and pure moonlight.

CHAPTER VIII.

An elegant entertainment was given by Mr. Morse, in honor of his son's birthday; and the party of young people from Woodleigh were of course among the invited guests. The spacious and richly furnished rooms were thrown open, and tastefully decorated with festoons and garlands of flowers. The assembled company was brilliant and numerous, and the young host did the honors with perfect politeness and propriety.

A band of musicians from the city was stationed upon one of the balconies, and the sweet inspiring strains floated in upon the evening air.

Altogether it was a brilliant and delightful *fête;* and the dear Aunt Elsie, who, with a group of parents and guardians, smilingly looked on and enjoyed the scene, observed with secret pleasure that her own little people, though less gayly attired than many of the guests, were universally sought after; their artless, yet graceful manners,

and bright faces, winning friends and admirers in all.

The following day the children could talk of nothing else than the delightful evening they had passed, and how much they had enjoyed it; while exclamations of admiring praise at the splendid and tastefully decorated apartments constantly burst forth, as they recalled the pleasant hours they had spent.

"How elegantly that young lady from the city was dressed!" said Ellen: "she seemed to be the belle of the evening."

"She was very richly dressed, to be sure," returned Harry, "and looked very handsome, but I saw many others who appeared much more charming and agreeable."

"Neither was she by any means the *belle*, as you call it, Ellen," added Fred: "though had she been a real bell, she could scarcely have made more noise than she did with her incessant talking and laughing. I agree with Harry, that there were plenty of young girls there who looked far prettier, and were better liked than this young lady from the city."

"Yes, indeed," said Grace; "I saw one at least who was every way more lovely, though she did

not seem to know it at all." And she glanced towards Edith as she spoke.

"And it was that unconsciousness which made the charm about her," returned Arthur, smiling, for he had heard many persons speak of the winning loveliness of both Grace and Clara. "Now this city belle never forgot for an instant that she was both handsome and well dressed, and expected every one else to acknowledge and remember it besides."

"She looked very proud, I think," chimed in Lilie; "and though her eyes were so large and bright, they were no brighter than Kate's, who looked a great deal prettier, I am sure."

"You will make me proud too, Lilie, if you don't take care," cried Kate, merrily tossing back her curls, and kissing Lilie as she spoke. "But I am too little yet to set up for a beauty, so there is no great harm done."

"No," added Fred, mischievously; "and unless your little nose should grow in proportion with your little self, I don't think there is much fear of your pretensions ever becoming great either."

"You are growing saucy, Fred," spoke his cousin Marian, good-naturedly; "and letting

your pretensions to cleverness overcome your politeness, I think. Those who live in glass houses, you know, should not throw stones; and if you think Kate's nose too small, you must also acknowledge your own as too large."

"Thank you, Marian," cried Kate, laughing. "Now, Fred, you are fairly answered, and before either of us set up as beauties, we will divide noses equally, that our chances may be fair. So that question is settled."

"Agreed," returned Fred, pleasantly; "and now since Kate's vanity seems proof against all assaults, I suppose she can bear to have the question of the belle of the evening again discussed."

"That I can," said the little girl, "and I know very well who was the prettiest and sweetest girl there."

"Yes," said Frank, looking about him as he spoke; "and as she is not present to hear it, we can name her: it was Edith."

"Right, Franky," replied Harry Wilder; "our tastes agree in this as in many other things."

"I think we will all agree in this choice," remarked Clara; "for Edith did look lovely in her simple white dress, and we all know she is just as sweet as she appears."

"And when the light fell upon her shining hair as she stood beneath the chandelier, and those joyous smiles of hers beamed from her face, she seemed like some pure spirit. I never knew before how beautiful she was," added Mabel, earnestly.

"And who may this be of whom I hear such high praise?" asked Aunt Elsie, who now joined the group.

"The one we have chosen as queen of the last night's festival," replied Harry: "and who do you think it is, Aunt Elsie?"

"I cannot even guess," replied the old lady, smiling; "for my old eyes were so completely dazzled by the brightness about me, that I could not decide who was fairest, where, to me at least, all seemed fair."

"Oh, Aunt Elsie," cried little Lilie, "you could not but see that our own Edith was the very sweetest and prettiest in all the room."

"I am by no means certain of that, Lilie," rejoined Aunt Elsie: "there were many others quite as pretty, and it may be even prettier."

"We don't mean mere beauty," remarked Arthur. "There is something about Edith more charming than a handsome face."

"I think she must possess some fairy gift," remarked Grace; "for every thing she says or does seems to please."

"That is because we all love her so well," added Marian.

"But tell us, Aunt Elsie; don't you think Edith is very, very sweet and pretty?" asked little Lilie, earnestly.

Aunt Elsie smiled.

"Edith is not prettier than many others," she said; "and yet I feel the charm you describe about her: although I think I know several other little people who possess it also, and they are as unconscious of owning it as Edith herself. But here she comes, so for the present we will drop the subject: by and by, perhaps, I may read you a story which will explain this nameless charm."

The children did not allow Aunt Elsie to forget her promise; and when they assembled on the lawn after tea, she read to them a story which was entitled—

THE ENCHANTED MIRROR.

The Enchanted Mirror,

AND

The Invisible Veil.

When fairies were in fashion, which was a long while ago, there dwelt a rich lord in a great castle, with his wife and two daughters.

At the christening feast of the elder daughter, whose name was Mercia, a powerful fairy was invited, as was the custom in those days, that she might bestow her precious gifts upon the child. The fairy arrived in due season, bringing with her a curiously wrought casket, carved with strange devices, in which were deposited the favors intended for the little unconscious Mercia.

When the proper moment arrived, the fairy opened the casket, and bade the lady of the castle choose from its contents those gifts which she desired her child to possess. The delighted mother gladly obeyed, and selecting all which seemed most attractive, showered them upon her beloved daughter, and the fairy closing the nearly

emptied casket, departed amid the grateful thanks of the happy parents.

Time passed away, and a little sister was given to Mercia; but the mother's heart was so absorbed in her first-born, that she made but little preparation for the christening festival of the young Alletté; and it was only by the merest chance that the fairy heard of it, and resolved to be present.

The lady of the castle was very happy when she heard of the arrival of the kind and powerful fairy, for she anticipated a renewal of the rich presents bestowed upon Mercia; but her disappointment was extreme when the fairy, opening the same casket, produced the only remaining gifts which the mother had before discarded as comparatively worthless, and bestowed them upon the young Alletté, saying as she did so—

"Though all my most brilliant favors have been lavished upon Mercia, these which I now bestow upon Alletté shall prove inestimable, and procure her a happiness which her sister will never know."

As she spoke these words, she threw over the unconscious child a vail of such exquisite texture as to become both invisible and intangible when

it left her hands, and then placing a tiny silver mirror of mysterious form upon the bosom of Alletté, pressed a kiss upon her eyelids and departed, unattended, however, by any of the marks of distinction which graced her previous visit: for the parents considered the favors bestowed upon this child as of very little value.

As the sisters grew to womanhood, the fairy favors that had been bestowed upon Mercia became more and more precious in the eyes of herself and her parents. She had beauty, grace, wit, and accomplishments, so that none could behold her without admiration.

The fairy, in endowing her with beauty, had given her a tall stately form, and proud dark eyes, while her complexion rivalled both the white and red roses in delicacy and rich coloring: every movement was graceful, and the words which dropped from her beautiful lips were full of sparkling wit and gayety.

Mercia was formed to be admired, and as she knew full well the value of her charms, exacted homage from all who approached her. But while her beauty attracted, her pride repelled; and Mercia, though flattered, courted, and admired, was far from being loved.

Alletté, on the contrary, possessed none of her sister's dazzling beauty. Her appearance was in no manner distinguished from many other young girls of her own age; and she seemed well content to pass unobserved when in company with the brilliant and beautiful Mercia.

Nevertheless the fairy gifts bestowed upon Alletté were not without their peculiar charm. The vail which the fairy had thrown over her face, though invisible to mortal eyes, yet cast a fascinating softness over her features. Her downcast eyes beamed with a pure light, and the blushes that mantled her cheek added new loveliness to her countenance. Every one felt this fairy charm, and all who approached Alletté loved her; indeed, there were some who called her lovelier than Mercia, though they knew she was not so handsome.

Meanwhile the little mirror which the fairy had placed upon her bosom rested there still, pure and unsullied by a single breath. It was truly an enchanted mirror, for it shone with the lustre of a diamond, and the clearness of crystal; and those who looked upon it saw reflected therein graceful and pleasant forms that seemed constantly to follow each other, while over all a soft

white dove appeared ever hovering, with outspread wings.

None who approached Alletté could fail to be attracted by this magic mirror, which she wore with a perfect unconsciousness of its power; and then when they lifted their gaze to her sweet and gentle face, beaming with all tender and kindly feelings, and softened still more by the fairy vail, no wonder that they felt mysteriously attracted towards her: and so, though all admired the beautiful Mercia, every one loved the gentle Alletté.

The sisters were as opposite in character as in appearance: Mercia expected admiration, and was angered at every fancied slight; while Alletté shrunk from notice, and was grateful for each word or look of kindness that greeted her.

It chanced one day (as it often did in the days of fairy dominion), that the king's son was journeying that way, and hearing of Mercia's great beauty, sojourned a few days at her father's castle. The proud Mercia was overjoyed at this distinction, and hastened to adorn herself with all her jewels, and display her fairy favors to the greatest advantage: while her sister, for whom all the pomp and parade incident to the reception of

a royal guest possessed no charm, sought the retirement of her own chamber, anxious to escape notice.

The prince was struck with admiration at the wonderful beauty of Mercia, who received his flattering homage with the dignity of an empress. Alletté meanwhile scarcely lifted her eyes, and far from seeking, or even expecting attention, sought the first opportunity to escape from the brilliant saloon into the quiet garden, which was only lighted by the pale silver moon.

Here, after enjoying the still coolness of the evening for a time, she rested a while upon a grassy bank, and it so happened that the prince himself, who had sought a momentary relief from the light and gayety within, strolled near by, and gazed upon her unobserved.

She seemed so pure and fair there in the still moonlight, that his glance rested upon her with pleasure: presently his eyes fell upon the enchanted mirror, and he too felt its powerful influence. The prince followed her steps when she arose, and respectfully accosted her: to his surprise, Alletté did not recognize him as the prince, for she had in truth noticed him too little to be able to know him again; but observing by

his dress that he belonged to the court, she supposed him to be one of the prince's retinue, and replied courteously to his remarks.

The prince was charmed with this adventure; there was to him something refreshing in an unreserved conversation, without the forced deference due to his rank; and Allette, on her part, found his society both instructive and agreeable.

Great was her astonishment, and even consternation, when, upon re-entering the saloon, she heard her companion addressed as the prince: and remembering the tone of her remarks, she felt filled with confusion at her unconscious boldness.

The prince, who still kept his gaze fixed upon the enchanted mirror, saw pictured therein all that was passing in her heart, and hastened to assure her by his gentleness and attention.

After a time the timid reserve of Allette yielded to this unassuming kindness, and she entered into the evening's amusements with innocent and unaffected enjoyment. And now so many bright shapes appeared upon the tiny mirror, as made it delightful to look upon; while Mercia, who felt herself neglected for Allette, stood proudly and coldly apart.

When the gentle sister saw Mercia so disturb-

ed, she instantly forsook her companions, and hastened to her side; but the proud girl turned coldly away, envying the possession of the charmed mirror, that seemed to win all hearts, while the affectionate solicitude of Alletté only made her appear more lovely.

After the guests had dispersed, Mercia gave full vent to her feelings of envy and mortified pride.

"Of what avail are all my fairy gifts," she cried, "if the power of this trifling mirror is greater than all! Why did my mother neglect selecting so valuable a treasure for me!"

"Do not reproach me, Mercia," returned her mother, who overheard her words: "had you even possessed the mirror, you could not have worn it with your other ornaments; it would soon have become sullied. But take courage; the flattery and attention that now surround Alletté will have the effect of dimming the charmed mirror, and then her power will be destroyed."

The proud Mercia was her mother's favorite, and she earnestly desired to see her reign queen over all hearts, and perhaps over all the land besides.

"Have patience, my daughter," she continued,

"and you will see how gradually the breath of admiration and flattery will obscure the enchanted mirror. It will then no longer reflect those forms that now appear so irresistible; and thus your sister's greatest charm will be lost, and yourself reign supreme."

"For my part I do not know what there is so wonderfully attractive in this mirror," returned Mercia, who was somewhat comforted by her mother's soothing. "To me it only presents a confused crowd of shapes, in which I distinguish nothing clearly, save the dove that broods there."

"It has strange charms for some, however," replied her mother; but she did not dare to add that the prince was one who felt them strongly.

Mercia never suspected that it was her own selfish pride and vanity that blinded her to the varying beauties of her sister's wonderful mirror; and had she carefully sought the casket where her fairy gifts were kept, she might have found far away in a neglected corner another tiny mirror, but so sullied and defaced by the other favors thrown upon it, that its dull surface reflected not one beam of light. But Mercia never thoroughly examined her casket: she was content to enjoy the bountiful gifts which could

be most readily grasped; and even had she found the magic mirror, would have cast it aside as worthless, unwilling to devote any care to polish its long-neglected surface, or remove the spots of rust which were fast corroding and destroying it.

The prince and his retinue continued several days at the castle, and so equally was his attention divided between the sisters, that none could tell which he preferred: the courtiers, therefore, whose admiration of course followed that of their master, fluctuated between the sisters in a pleasing dilemma; but a few, with more candor and less courtliness than the rest, attached themselves exclusively to Allette.

Meanwhile the enchanted mirror remained bright and pure as ever: neither the breath of flattery nor the venom of jealousy could sully its brightness for a single moment.

The prince, indeed, sometimes thought he recognized himself in one of the pleasing shadowy forms that flitted across its surface; but the vision faded rapidly from view, and he contented himself with observing all in silence. He saw the pains which Mercia took to display her own charms, while endeavoring to cast Allette's entirely aside; and though the proud girl used every

effort to appear amiable and gentle, as she was certainly beautiful and brilliant, the prince was not deceived, though she deceived herself.

The visit of the king's son was concluded, and he left the castle with many gracious acknowledgments of the hospitality he had received. He courteously saluted the sisters, and intimated a desire to see them soon at court, where, he added, their beauty would win all the admiration it so richly deserved.

Mercia was sure his glance rested exclusively upon her as he spoke, and her mind was already filled with bright visions of the future, when she should appear in regal magnificence at the palace: while Alletté merely thought herself included in the complimentary invitation from regard to her sister, and experienced only regret at the departure of the prince.

She was happily unconscious that their guest, casting a glance upon the magic mirror as he bade her farewell, saw himself reflected therein with a vividness no shape had ever possessed before.

After his departure, Mercia dwelt in continual anticipation of the promised appearance at court; and was so absorbed in her own imaginings, that

she ceased to heed Alletté, or to envy the enchanted mirror. Her vanity assured her that the attentions of the prince were all directed to herself, and that from her sister she had nothing to fear.

Alletté meanwhile was equally deceived: she never for a moment expected any to prefer her to the beautiful Mercia; and endeavored, while sharing her sister's hopes and expectations, to drive the image of the prince from her remembrance.

The long-desired invitation at length arrived: there was a grand entertainment to be given at the palace, and the sisters were among the honored guests.

The proud heart of Mercia beat high with anticipated triumph; but Alletté desired to be left behind. She did not dare, however, to follow her inclination, since the royal invitation was equal to a command, and so reluctantly accompanied her mother and sister to the palace.

The prince welcomed the sisters with every demonstration of pleasure; while he observed with secret satisfaction the blush that rose to Alletté's cheek, on finding herself thus introduced to the brilliant assemblage of a court, and noticed

besides that the charmed mirror was as unsullied as before.

The dazzling beauty and wit of Mercia soon gathered a throng of admirers about her, and even the prince seemed to yield to her influence, and devoted all his attention to her; while the unobtrusive charms of Alletté were not calculated to command the admiration of a gay court, and when the prince appeared to decide in favor of her sister, the gentle Alletté sunk into comparative obscurity.

Thus deserted by the giddy crowd of flatterers who buzzed around Mercia like a swarm of bees about a newly opened flower, and scarcely noticed by the prince, whom she had never ceased to remember, Alletté might well have become sad and spiritless. But in her humility she blamed herself for ever having allowed a thought to stray towards their royal entertainer, and rebuked the vain spirit that could for an instant place itself upon a level with the incomparable Mercia.

Thus humbled and subdued, Alletté communed with herself; and though the forms that flitted across the magic mirror were oftentimes confused and sad-colored, still its surface remained

undimmed and pure, and the soft dove brooded over it.

Secure in the power of her wondrous charms, the haughty Mercia assumed the dignity of a queen, and received the homage tendered her as her just due; while the king's son seemed willingly to wear her chains, and Alletté appeared scarcely remembered.

It chanced one day as the party strolled upon a terrace, that a wounded bird fluttered towards them, and fell at the sisters' feet. Mercia, glad of an opportunity to display her sensibility, tenderly raised the bird, and pressing it to her cheek, smoothed its ruffled plumes, regardless of the blood-drops that stained her rich dress, and wept when the poor little thing drooped its head upon its breast and died.

"What tenderness! what charming sensibility!" exclaimed the admiring group who surrounded her, while the prince himself took the bird from her hands, and ordered it to be stuffed and preserved among his private collection.

This compliment completely turned the brain of the vain Mercia, while Alletté looked silently on without one pang of envy, and the magic mirror remained undimmed.

A short time after this adventure the royal party went out to the chase; the day passed away, and as night drew near, their return was each moment expected. The palace was already lighted, and the shadows of twilight had deepened into the shades of night, when the sisters, superbly dressed for the evening, descended the terrace, and strolled into the grounds.

Mercia was all impatience for the return of the hunting party; for her the still evening had no attraction, while Alletté felt soothed and happy in the quiet and beauty of all about her. Thus, as their musings were so opposite, the sisters walked on in silence.

Presently they were startled by the rustling of the bushes near them, and the sharp crackling of the underbrush, as a man hurriedly made his way through the tangled copse, and was passing rapidly on, when observing them, he paused.

"For the love of mercy, ladies," he said, in anxious, eager tones, "step down to my poor cottage, where lies a wretched man desperately wounded. I found him just beyond in the woods, and bore him to my home; but he faints from loss of blood, and I have none to help him: he wears the dress of a king's servitor, or something

of the kind, for I am not skilled in courtly matters, and am hastening to the palace for assistance: meanwhile he may die."

"Hasten on," replied Alletté, anxiously, "and ask for the king's physician; meantime I will go to the poor man myself. If your cottage is just without the copse I can find it: quick, lose no time."

The man obeyed, and ran towards the palace.

"Why, Alletté, are you crazed?" asked Mercia, as her sister walked rapidly on. "You will ruin your dress, if nothing more, in forcing your way through the copse. I dare say it is some poor wood-cutter, and the man will be back soon enough."

"Let him be who he may," returned Alletté, still hurrying on, "he is alone and suffering: it is doubtless one of the retainers, who has perhaps been wounded in the chase. Will you go with me, sister?" she added, as they had now reached the edge of the copse.

"Not I, indeed," replied Mercia. "I like not such adventures: why, my dress would not be fit to appear in upon the prince's return."

But Alletté tarried not to hear the concluding words: making her way as fast as possible through

brake and brier, she hurried onward on her mission of mercy.

The cottage was easily found; it was a miserable hovel, and eagerly pushing open the door, Alletté entered. By the flickering flame of a solitary rushlight she distinguished the form of a man lying upon a wretched pallet, moaning in distress. She could not see his face, but she knew by the dress that he belonged to the retinue of the prince.

Gently approaching, she found the blood oozing through his doublet at the shoulder; and hurriedly taking a pruning-knife from the settle where the wood-cutter had thrown it, she ripped open the doublet, and staunching the blood as best she could, looked around in vain for something to bind up the wound; but the poor cottage was utterly destitute of any thing suitable.

Then, without a second thought, Alletté loosened the delicate silk scarf from her neck, and bound it across the shoulder of the wounded man. The wretched hovel afforded no water even to bathe the sufferer's brow; and as Alletté stood troubled and anxious, the sound of several voices was heard; hasty steps approached, and as the door was eagerly opened, the fresh night air

extinguished the rushlight, and left all in darkness.

Alletté had recognized the voices of the woodcutter and king's physician, and now that aid was at hand, and the immediate need of her services past, her timidity returned, and she hastened to escape in the confusion that ensued.

This she easily effected; and quickly gaining the copse, passed through the tangled brush, regardless of her dress, and proceeded rapidly to the palace, where she succeeded in gaining her own apartment unperceived.

After hastily removing her soiled and disordered dress, she sat down to recover breath and calmness. Now that the occasion was past, she felt alarmed at her own temerity, and thought that she had rendered no very effectual aid after all.

She was aroused from this train of reflection by a bustle in the palace, and Mercia rushed in pale with affright. The prince had been brought home badly wounded, and all was confusion and alarm. Mercia eagerly asked her sister whether she had found the wounded person, and if it was the prince; but Alletté replied that she did not see the man's features, and as aid speedily arrived, she hastened away.

The timid girl concealed from her questioner the aid she had rendered the sufferer, who she now admitted, with a throbbing heart, might have been the prince himself; and Mercia departed to gather farther information.

This untoward accident occasioned an intermission of the festivities, and the guests were desirous to leave; but they were desired to remain, as the hurt of the king's son was not dangerous, and in a few days he would be able to join them again.

These few days of the prince's seclusion were employed by Mercia in inventing various delicate attentions to bestow upon the invalid. Messages of inquiry were constantly sent in her mother's name, accompanied by some exquisite flowers or dainty confection from herself. And as the acknowledgments were always gracious, and sometimes even expressed something more than mere courtly phrase, Mercia's heart beat high.

Meantime Alletté could think of nothing but the danger and suffering of the prince. Her shrinking modesty would not allow her to tender any of the attentions which Mercia so freely offered; and she felt a constant dread lest the scarf she had bound upon the wound should betray the

assistance she had rendered, and which she feared would be considered most unwarrantable boldness.

The entire recovery of the prince was at length announced, and all the courtiers and guests assembled in the grand saloon to welcome his reappearance. He entered, leaning upon the arm of his chamberlain; and though somewhat pale, smiled graciously on all, and received their congratulations with the gratitude of a noble and sensitive heart.

Releasing himself from the circle of courtiers who crowded about him, he approached the sisters, who stood together, and taking the willing hand of the delighted Mercia, expressed in courtly words his sense of her attentive kindness.

The eyes of the proud girl flashed with triumph at this open acknowledgment, while Alletté stood pale, trembling, and apparently unnoticed.

"But I have a deeper debt of gratitude to acknowledge," he continued in a low voice that only reached the sisters. "I wear in my bosom a token of the gentle hand that succored me in the hour of distress and need: it can belong only to her who has already displayed such tender sensibility, and from whom," he added yet more

earnestly, "I hope yet to claim a still more precious boon."

At these words the brow of Alletté burned with truant blushes, that were only heightened by the fairy vail: and then the blood rushed back to her heart, and left her pale, cold, and trembling, while Mercia, by whom part of this speech was scarcely understood, only dwelt upon his closing words, and a glow of delight added new lustre to her radiant beauty.

The gaze of the prince quickly fell upon the countenance of each, and then as his glance turned upon the enchanted mirror, which yet rested upon the bosom of Alletté, he saw reflected therein the scene at the wood-cutter's cottage, and then himself pale and wounded, with graceful shadowy spirits flitting over him; these forms were rapidly succeeded by other scenes, wherein himself and Mercia constantly appeared; but though the colors were no longer bright, the mirror was still pure and undimmed, and the dove kept watch above all.

The prince stood absorbed in the contemplation of the magic mirror, and forgetful of all about him, until aroused by the voices of his courtiers; and then lifting his glance a moment

to the sweet countenance of Alletté, he turned silently away.

Mercia noticed his look, and her proud spirit was troubled; but upon questioning Alletté, the gentle girl would give no farther explanation of her adventure, and Mercia resigned herself to the hope the words of the prince had inspired.

During all the evening the proud and happy Mercia was the chosen queen of the festival; the prince scarcely left her side; but had she been less absorbed in her own vain dreams, she would have seen that the gaze of the king's son was often riveted upon the enchanted mirror, which remained unsullied by a breath of envy or discontent, though the shapes within seemed sad and troubled.

The prince made many allusions to Mercia, regarding the assistance she had rendered him; but she skilfully avoided any direct reply, allowing him to infer that she had done more than her modesty would allow her to admit; though every word he spoke only convinced her the more that Alletté had rendered him some aid, of which she was unworthily receiving the praise.

Thus the evening passed, and a special entertainment was announced for the ensuing night in

commemoration of the prince's recovery, and in honor of the queen of loveliness, who, it was understood, should then publicly receive some token of acknowledgment from the prince himself.

Every one considered Mercia as beyond all doubt the intended queen of the festival, and she entertained the same expectation; while Alletté sighed heavily, and wished the pageant over, that she might return to the quiet of her home, and endeavor, in knowing her sister's happiness, to forget her own sorrow.

The prince saw all these thoughts pictured faithfully within the tiny magic mirror, which none other thought worth while to notice, but which he could readily observe, for his nature was noble, and untainted by selfish pride.

The evening of the festival arrived, and the spacious saloon was filled with splendidly attired and expectant guests. Mercia had arrayed herself in royal magnificence, and displayed all her fairy favors to the best advantage. Her beauty was dazzling and marvellous; but in conscious security she had cast aside all humility, and her arrogant pride provoked many a sneer, which her apparent favor with the prince prevented be-

ing openly expressed. Mercia was admired, flattered, and feared, but not loved.

Alletté endeavored in vain to appear gay. She was cheerful and calm, but she wore little ornament, and timidly sought to escape observation. The forms reflected within the magic mirror had lost their brilliance, and seemed to move sadly upon its clear pure surface.

Just before the supper hour arrived, the prince seated himself upon his divan, and gathering about him a select circle of his chosen ministers and guests, among whom the sisters were desired to occupy a conspicuous place, he said:

"We have ordered this festival in honor of the queen of loveliness; but before making our election, hear this fable:—

"A tulip and a tuft of violets grew side by side. The tulip lifted its proud head to the sun, and claimed the admiration of all by its brilliant colors; but the modest violet nestled among the green leaves, and only sent a breath of perfume upon the air. A traveller, wearied with the heat of noonday, paused to admire the flowers: the tulip attracted him by its gorgeous beauty, but the violet won him by its unobtrusive charms. As he bent over them, a delicious fragrance

floated towards him, refreshing his wearied senses.

"'To which does this delightful perfume belong?' he asked. 'Be it which it may, I will transplant you to my garden, and nurture you with care. Is the fragrance thine?' he added, bending towards the tulip.

"Then the stately flower raised her brilliant head proudly, and acknowledged the sweet odor hers.

"But the modest violet thought, 'The tulip is so beautiful, she will adorn the garden more than I; and planted with other flowers, she may win a fragrance at last. She desires to be admired: I will not claim the perfume as mine, but remain content in knowing she is happy.'

"The gentle violet sighed as she thought, and her breath betrayed the truth: then the traveller stooped, and lifting the tuft of modest violets, planted them in his own garden, and cherished them there forever."

The prince spoke with emotion, and rising as he ceased, approached Alletté, adding,

"And thus, though the tulip be beautiful and brilliant, I, too, choose the sweet and modest violet!"

He drew the hand of the bewildered Alletté within his arm as he spoke: the courtiers rose in surprise, Mercia paled with mingled emotions: at the same moment the immense doors of the saloon were thrown open, and beyond appeared a splendid hall, gleaming with lights, and decorated with rich medallions, bearing the respective inscriptions—

"To Mercia, the beautiful."

"To Alletté, the queen of loveliness."

Then the prince graciously offered his left arm to Mercia, while Alletté hung confused and trembling upon his right, scarcely comprehending the sudden change, and afraid to trust the sense of happiness that crept into her heart. But the proud and disappointed Mercia turned haughtily away, and accepting the support of the chamberlain, passed into the hall, endeavoring to conceal her mortification beneath an air of disdain.

How the banquet progressed, and the readiness with which the courtiers transferred their admiration to the chosen queen; how to many the unexpected turn of affairs remained a mystery, while to a few it was revealed; how the proud Mercia was humbled, and married to a noble lord at last; and how the happy Alletté learned from

the devoted prince, all his trials of her gentleness, and the wonderful influence of the enchanted mirror and fairy vail in bringing their happiness about;—all these things would occupy pages in repeating: but that the prince and Alletté lived happy all their days, and governed with wisdom and kindness, is a truth that can be found recorded in the archives of the nation, should any choose to seek there; while the memory of the gentle queen, like the sweet fragrance of the violet, breathed perfume long after she had passed away.

"That is a real fairy story," cried Kate, clapping her hands as Aunt Elsie ceased. "The first Aunt Elsie has told about a prince: I like it so very much."

"Why, Kate, you are the young lady who despised dress and riches," returned Fred, laughing; "and now you are dazzled by a prince. Fie, Kate, be consistent."

"Kings and princes are common enough," said little Lilie: "all fairy tales except Aunt Elsie's are full of them."

"But we are forgetting the object with which Aunt Elsie told us the story," added Mabel. "I think Alletté's invisible vail must have been modesty."

"And the enchanted mirror, what was that?" asked Ellen.

"Purity of heart, I think," returned Grace.

"And the dove was innocence," continued Clara.

"Ah, I understand now," remarked Harry Wilder, "what the fairy charms are which we were discussing; and as Aunt Elsie is kind fairy enough to explain them to you, young ladies, I trust you will each endeavor to possess them, since they are within the reach of all."

A party of visitors were now seen entering the gate, and the conversation ceased.

CHAPTER IX.

The midsummer was now past, and the little party were once more about to separate. The kind intentions of Aunt Elsie and Mr. Helme had been carried into effect, and Frank was to leave for his new home, while little Lilie remained at Woodleigh.

The last evening arrived, and the group of little people were assembled upon the old piazza. The day had been spent in visiting every favorite haunt, and taking a lingering farewell of the spots where so many happy hours had been passed.

A violent and sudden shower hurried the children into the house before sunset, and they were now gathered upon the piazza watching the heavy clouds as they rolled mutteringly back into the western sky. Suddenly a gleam of sunshine burst forth amid the black masses, and a beautiful rainbow appeared.

"Look, look!" cried little Lilie. "See what a bright rainbow, and yet the drops are falling!"

"I was just comparing these dark clouds and the heavy shower to our grief at parting, and the tears that will be shed," said Arthur, with a smile; "and now this beautiful rainbow bursts through the clouds like a harbinger of joy after all."

"I hope it may be," returned Ellen; "but I cannot bear to leave this dear pleasant Woodleigh, where I have been so happy."

"Nor can I," replied Kate. "I never enjoyed myself so much before in all my life, and don't know when I shall again. Now I must cast aside my sunbonnet, keep my hair smooth, and walk demurely to school, where I must sit quite still for so many hours, poring over my books: I know very well that I shall often be thinking of Woodleigh, instead of my lessons."

"Frank is a lucky fellow to live at that splendid place, and be so near Woodleigh besides," remarked Robert; "while we can only carry the remembrance with us to our city homes."

"I do feel very happy," answered Frank; "but you forget, Robert, that I too shall leave for school."

"I think we may carry something more than the mere remembrance of these pleasant hours with us," now said Edith. "Some of the good spirits whom Aunt Elsie has evoked, will, I trust, remain with us, even after we part."

"True, Edith," returned Harry, in his droll quiet way: "in the first place we have Constancy, which will teach us to remember and love each other always, though we should be separated."

"And Cheerfulness," added Fred, "which is a quality I feel it my especial duty to cultivate. I hope you will all follow the example I shall endeavor to set, and each carry with you a fairy sunbeam."

"We must not forget Ida's experiment," responded Mabel; "but remember to perform all our duties well, trusting that a good result will follow."

"And the lesson of Persevering Industry I shall carry to school with me, to assist in accomplishing my tasks, which often appear irksome and useless," said Edward, "as I at least have no golden root to depend upon."

"And I," continued Robert, "must think of Master Snip when I crave any thing of another's, and so avoid covetousness."

"We must all remember the lesson of Forbearance and Forgiveness which the white violet teaches," remarked Grace; "then we shall be always beloved."

"Yes," added her sister Clara; "if at the same time we wear the Invisible Vail and the Enchanted Mirror."

"Do not let us leave the Singing Bird from Fairy-land behind us," said Marian; "for without its cheering strain we could never indulge a thought of meeting again."

"I am happy, my dear children," now spoke the good Aunt Elsie, "to see the fairy sunbeam of cheerfulness already dissipating the gloom of parting; and shall feel blest indeed, if in your after life you are guided by even one good spirit from the quiet shades of Woodleigh."

And now the little people had departed, and Aunt Elsie was left alone with little Lilie, to the enjoyment of the favorite resorts. Summer deepened into autumn, and the forest trees were clothed in foliage of gorgeous and varied hues.

"The sound of dropping nuts was heard in the still woods," and the nimble squirrel laid up his winter store.

Then came the bleak north wind, and with his icy breath stripped the branches of their crisped leaves, and hung glittering icicles in their stead. The sun loved not to look upon the scene of desolation, and hurriedly sunk to rest, leaving the long dark nights to brood over the gloomy forest and the frozen earth.

And then it was Christmas once more.

Thus as the seasons rolled on in their appointed course, and the holidays came again, the dear old house at Woodleigh was filled with bright and happy faces; and the good Aunt Elsie was ever surrounded with her beloved group of Fireside Fairies, or circle of Midsummer Fays.

THE END.

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